



# Silicon Plateau Vol-I





**Silicon Plateau**  
**Vol-I**



## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

This book marks the beginning of an interdisciplinary artistic project\*, Silicon Plateau\*\*, the scope of which is to observe how the arts, technology and society intersect in the city of Bangalore. Guided by our belief in the importance of understanding technologies in their specificity rather than their universality, Silicon Plateau will be presenting observations emerging from the personal experiences and perspectives of a variety of contemporary artists, writers and researchers, national and international, who either live in or have spent a period of time in the city, or have just crossed paths with its communities.

When discussing our intent to instigate renewed readings of the Bangalorean urban and socio-cultural landscape, some of the limits of this project came to the fore. The difficulty of tackling the layered histories and socio-political life of a fast-changing city, and the danger of falling into the trap of developing superficial impressions of Bangalore, generalizing its characteristics, were some of them. However, we soon agreed that the act of developing impressions is integral to the nature of artistic, scientific and creative practices, whose long and short-term outcomes often originate from an initial observation, or a sudden realization. With this in mind, we went ahead and oriented the series towards a hybrid approach to observation: the research informing the project

will have to be as diverse as the practices and fields of work—from visual arts to journalism and law—of the contributors, or observers, invited to participate in each installment of Silicon Plateau.

For us this series has a two-fold core. On the one side, there is the city of Bangalore, the trigger for various reflections about the way in which technology (old or emerging, as a service or as infrastructure) informs the socio-cultural and political environment; a city that is fascinating to us not just because we are located here but also for its characteristic fast-paced development shaped by the IT-boom and related industries. On the other side, there are the arts and creative thinking, for us the languages, lenses and methods to be used for interpreting technological developments and discussing their role and impact in the present time.

Our hope is that of building a series based on tangible accounts revolving around the unresolved complexities inherent to the intermingling of the arts, technology and society, and in the context of local histories and occurrences rather than of global narratives and mass media constructs. Stories that for our audience, we hope, will be those of the encounters—fortuitous, anticipated or even inconvenient—that a wide variety of contributors will have had with this fascinating city.



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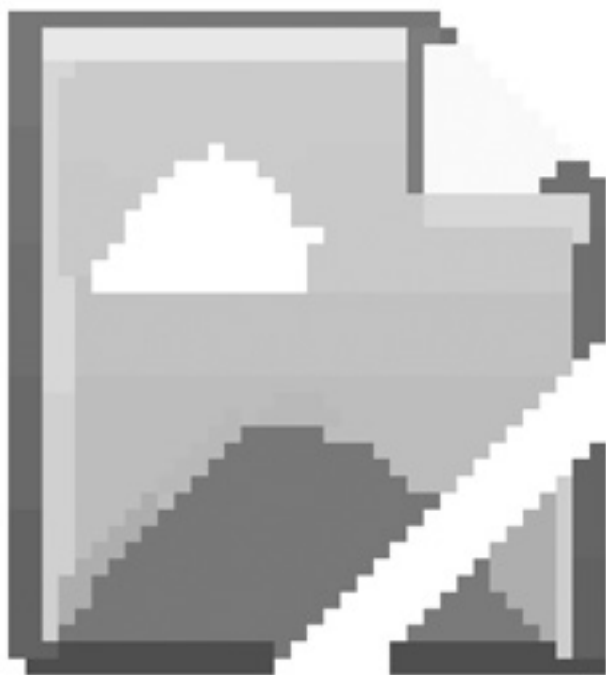
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## SILICON PLATEAU 1

The first volume of Silicon Plateau revolves around representations of the city of Bangalore. Our interest focused on how such representations are currently manifested in space, the way they are disseminated in the public domain in the form of advertising and urban development planning, for example how they are connected to the lives of the city's inhabitants. And so, with this framework in mind, we asked nine practitioners—from artists to writers and researchers in various fields—to propose work responding to how the rhetoric of such narratives is reflected in the city and might impact the behaviors and livelihood of its inhabitants who encounter them in their daily lives—intentionally or just indirectly.

Not necessarily all Bangalore-based and often temporary visitors, the nine contributors\*\*\*, the 'observers' of Silicon Plateau 1, have brought to light not just the way in which these cultural and market-driven narratives are generated but also the fact that they often hide socio-political issues which are complex to describe; issues that directly relate to labor conditions, regulation of public spaces and infrastructure, social organization and mobility and the political past of the city. All together the works of the contributors discuss some aspects of this entanglement not as mere factual accounts but as a series of creative reflections. They propose new avenues for

looking at the unfolding of current urban phenomena, often pointing at the springing up of many alternative ways of thinking and behaving.

While artist Abhishek Hazra touches upon the connections between technological hegemony and social transformation, writer Achal Prabhala looks at social separatism embedded in urban regeneration, presenting the reverse-effect of the city's redevelopment. The collective IOCOSE proposes a reflection on their own practice, embedding in it the opportunity of reinvention given by the failure of the promises of technological development, whereas writer Anil Menon looks at reinvention from a psychological point of view, offering a fictional account of IT-workers' lived lives and personal dreams. Interiors are explored by both artists Sunita Prasad and Renuka Rajiv. If the former uses video to take the reader inside several Bangalorean workplaces and discuss gender issues related to them, the latter uses drawing to propose a set of eerie constructed spaces that question the very same language of the technological. Through an account of his own practice, artist Sreshta Rit Premnath offers a re-reading of the market-driven narratives of utopian living and their relationship with the visions of the real created by the real estate industry, Tara Kelton reveals the commonplace symbolism involved in the branding of the technological.

Silicon Plateau 1 also includes republished material by artist Christoph Schäfer and graphic designers Anja Gollor and Mirko Merkel; the work of Schäfer is a decade-old precedent of our exploration into the manufacturing of dreams created by the real estate industry, while Gollor and Merkel offer a visual account of many places discussed by the contributors to this edition.

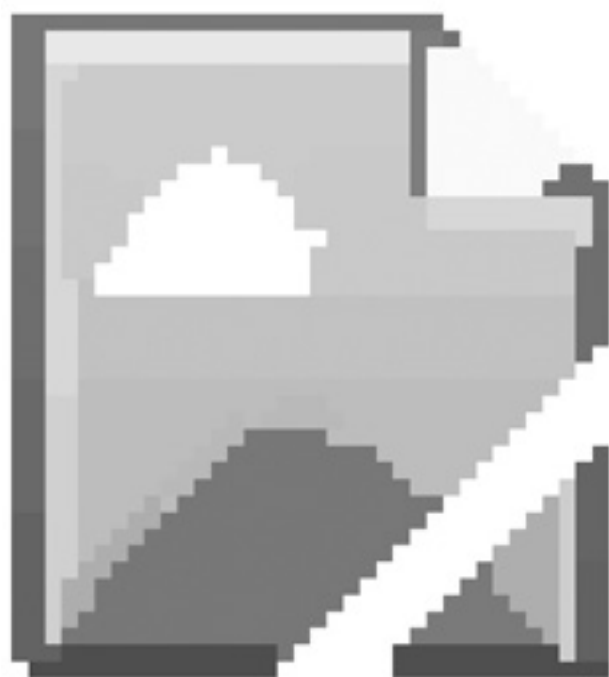
These works present what lies behind constructed representations of a city and its reality, hopefully providing the reader with renewed and unexpected entry points into the city.

—MARIALaura GHIDINI  
Co-editor of the series

\* SILICON PLATEAU WAS BORN FROM A COLLABORATION BETWEEN T.A.J. RESIDENCY & SKE PROJECTS AND THE RESEARCHERS AT WORK (RAW) PROGRAM OF THE CENTRE FOR INTERNET AND SOCIETY, IN CONJUNCTION WITH OR-BITS.COM FOR SILICON PLATEAU 1. EVEN THOUGH EACH OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS OPERATES IN DIFFERENT FIELDS OF WORK, THEY HAVE ALL DEDICATED PART OF THEIR ACTIVITY TO THE EXPLORATION OF THE CHANGES THAT INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY AND/OR THE ARTS IN INDIA AND BEYOND.

\*\* THE SERIES IS TITLED AFTER BANGALORE'S NICKNAME, WHICH ORIGINATES FROM ITS GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION IN THE DECCAN PLATEAU IN THE STATE OF KARNATAKA, INDIA.

\*\*\* THE CONTRIBUTORS WERE CHOSEN NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEIR RESEARCH RESONATED WITH THE INTENTS OF THIS BOOK, BUT ALSO FOR THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FOR INTERNET AND SOCIETY AND T.A.J. RESIDENCY & SKE PROJECTS. MANY OF THEM WERE ARTISTS, WRITERS AND RESEARCHERS IN RESIDENCE AT THE LATTER.



VECTOR(D, R)  
ABHISHEK HAZRA



In which

D. R. Nagaraj

shows us



how to  
make a  
field  
recording



of a  
Jacquard  
Loom

Doddaballapur, located to the north of Bangalore, is a prominent weaving center, historically noted for its silk weaving and of late for being a prominent site for major investments in the textile and garment sector. Doddaballapur was also the native village of D. R. Nagaraj (1954-1998), widely recognized as one of India's foremost cultural critics and one of the most original thinkers on the "politics of cultural choice among historically humiliated communities"<sup>1</sup>, including Dalits and artisanal castes known as Shudras.

Nagaraj's intellectual practice has often been celebrated as one of "rooted cosmopolitanism",<sup>2</sup> where he was able to combine his perceptive understanding of contemporary metropolitan thought with a deep "knowledge of his own linguistic tradition"<sup>3</sup>. If one were to write an intellectual history of late twentieth century Bangalore, D.R. Nagaraj would occupy a prominent place there.

In the introduction to "Listening to the Loom", the second collection of Nagaraj's essays in English, the editor Chandra Shobhi makes a connection with a story from which the collection derives its name. The story was recounted by the novelist U.R. Ananthamurthy who said that once, while walking in Kathmandu with Nagaraj, his companion asked him to stop and listen to the sound of a weaver's loom that only he had heard. As someone who was deeply familiar with Nagaraj and his work, the significance of this aural acuity was not lost on Ananthamurthy: "he recalls saying to Nagaraj that so long as he, Nagaraj, retained this ability to hear the sound of a loom, he would never become a 'Non-Resident Indian' intellectual".

In Nagaraj's writings, one gets that sense that the loom is however implicitly framed as an artisanal activity, embedded within the pre-modern technological



community of the craftsman. This also follows from his critique of techno-modernity and his observations on the linkages between caste-based oppression and technological hegemony. Now, one could argue that technology per se wasn't the main focus of Nagaraj's thinking, but given his intellectual brilliance, I have often wondered what would he have made of the increasing presence of the 'networked digital' in contemporary India—particularly in his city of Bangalore—and the kind of social energies it has helped engender?

1. Pollock, Sheldon I., and Breckenridge, Carol Appadurai. "In Honor of D. R. Nagaraj." New York: Public Culture, Volume 12, no 3, 2000. pp.xiv – xiv.

2. Guha, Ramachandra. "Rooted Cosmopolitan: D.R. Nagaraj." In "An Anthropologist Among the Marxists and Other Essays. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001. pp.33–40. See also, Kwame, Anthony Appiah. "Rooted Cosmopolitanism." In "The Ethics of Identity".. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005. pp.213–272

3. Ibid.

4. Nagaraj, D.R. "Listening to the Loom: Essays on Literature, Politics and Violence". Edited by Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi. Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2012.

5. Shobhi, Prithvi Datta Chandra. "Editorial Note and Acknowledgements." In "Listening to the Loom: Essays on Literature, Politics, and Violence" Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2012. p.viii

MELROSE PLACE-D IN BANGALORE (2005)  
CHRISTOPH SCHÄFER

"Melrose Place-d in Bangalore" is a four-screen video installation exploring the cross-relations between architecture, mass media and urbanity in the twenty-first century. The work centers around the housing complex "Melrose"—named after the Nineties American TV series Melrose Place—a homogeneous gated community built on the IT corridor in Bangalore.

The strange thing about Melrose Place  
on TV was, that you would always  
only see three sides of the courtyard:



"MELROSE PLACE-D IN BANGALORE", 2005; VIDEO SCREENSHOTS

Schäfer interviewed the inhabitants of "Melrose" about their lives inside the complex and their views on the fantasy world depicted in the television series. The interviews bring about ideas of utopian communes of collective living, the way in which community life is influenced by architecture and spatial configurations, as well as issues of longing and loneliness. The videos were accompanied by a social map drawn by the artist on tablecloth that presented architec-

tural connections between various housing complexes developed over the course of centuries and inspired by the model of the arcade, from the phalanstère of Charles Fourier (Nineteenth century) and the utopian world of Melrose Place (1992-1998) to the reality of "Melrose". The video installation was presented at the Lady Jehangir Kothari Memorial Hall during the "World-Information City Bangalore" event in 2005\*.



"MELROSE PLACE-D IN BANGALORE", 2005; INSTALLATION VIEW AT LADY JEHANGIR KOTHARI  
MEMORIAL HALL, BANGALORE

We asked the artist some questions to contextualize the artwork for Silicon Plateau 1.

Marialaura Ghidini: Can you tell us what brought you to the making of the video "Melrose Place-d in Bangalore"?

Christoph Schäfer: When I came to Bangalore in 2005, I felt that all the things that interested me most—like irregular cities, grey technology markets, or an unruly use of technical gadgets and light effects—were already much better researched and worked on by Indian artists like the Raqs Media Collective, Sarai,

Lawrence Liang, Shaina Anand and Ashok Sukumaran, as well as researcher Benjamin Solomon. I shared a couple of critical references with these fine artists and practitioners—the thinking of Lefebvre as well as that of the Situationists: the idea of art as platform and a deep love for the products of the many and the inventions from everyday life.

I was quite clueless at that time... When I stumbled across the ad for the “Melrose” gated community, I felt like I was in the wrong position. I had been an avid watcher of the first two seasons of the series; this is why the ad triggered my thinking (this process of reflection is visible in the diagram that was part of the video installation).

MG: What do you think is the relationship between the dreamt worlds depicted in the TV series and the lives of the people you interviewed?

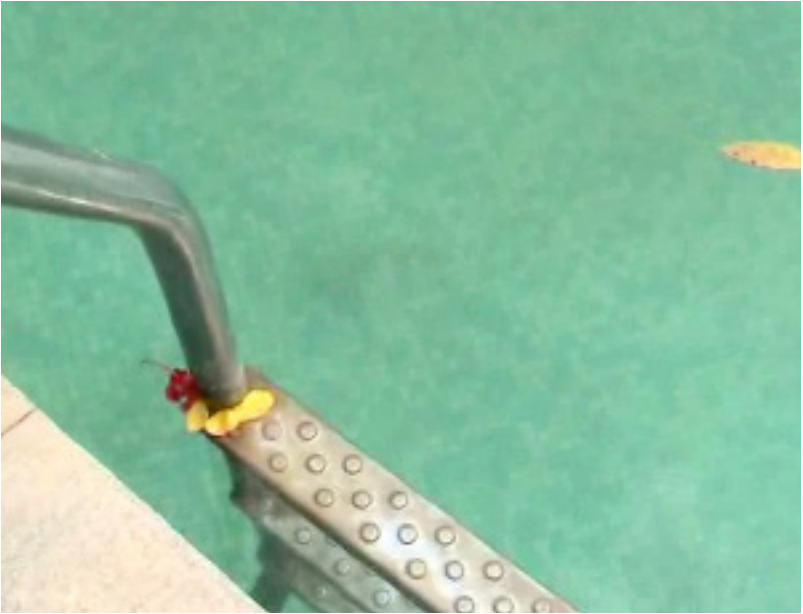
CS: The series’ fantasy was suggesting a kind of de-politicized desire for a community; an element that responded quite well, I think, with the flat structure of the IT and startups boom of the time. In this sense, I found “Melrose” quite logical—yet not a consequent transformation—and a good entry point for a conversation. Since I believe that it can be a problem when art becomes too political too quickly, this reference seemed to offer an opportunity to try to communicate different cultural fields and share thoughts in a somewhat light and handy way. Also I realized that this almost new-to-India lifestyle of suburban dwelling for people with middleclass income somehow related to the suburbs I grew up in Germany, which were built in the Sixties. Dreams of quickly-produced wealth, the rise of new phenomena such as the lonely condition of housewives and restricted living conditions, along with uncanny feelings of alienation despite the fact that people's material needs were all met, were common to both.

Suddenly it became clear, why they  
could not show this side:  
Because behind that wall was my flat.  
I was living there, the TV  
being my window into Melrose Place's  
courtyard.



"MELROSE PLACE-D IN BANGALORE", 2005; VIDEO SCREENSHOTS

I hate gated communities because they don't add anything to a city, they only profit from its infrastructure giving nothing in return.



"MELROSE PLACE-D IN BANGALORE", 2005; VIDEO SCREENSHOTS

The pop cultural field of TV offered a valid opening to address these serious issues without directly speaking about them, while keeping them in the background.

The translation of Melrose Place into the suburban Bangalore situation signifies the same anti-urban move, that we saw in the shift from arcade to phalanstere.

The young people living around the courtyard of Melrose Place are all the same age - a paradise for the young and healthy.

The gated situation echoes early socialist ideas, like Fourier's idea for a phalanstere, a utopian commune of collective living around a courtyard.

"MELROSE PLACE-D IN BANGALORE", 2005; VIDEO SCREENSHOTS

Other than this, I don't actually know how the imaginary lives of the people I interviewed relate to TV. I can't answer this question. At that time, I had the

feeling that people were not willing to say much about or reflect upon what they saw as entertainment. It seemed like they took pop culture very seriously, with no middle-ground reflection, even though some of them enjoyed the series for the dreaming worlds it depicted.

MG: If you had a chance to go back to Bangalore after the WI-C, have you noticed changes in the scenario that you presented in the video? And if so, what has changed?

CS: Right now I am in Bombay for a conference but I haven't been to India since 2005, so I cannot reply to this question yet.

\*The "World-Information City" was a "one-week program of events that addressed global issues of intellectual property and technology in conjunction with the changing urban landscape". It took place across Bangalore in 2005 and was organized by a group of national and international organizations: Alternative Law Forum (ALF) in Bangalore (India), Institute of New Culture Technologies/t0 in Vienna (Austria), Sarai-CSDS in New Delhi (India) and Waag Society in Amsterdam (Netherlands). The program included a conference, exhibitions, a public campaign, workshops and music events and combined various mediums of display with diverse locations (from Cubbon Park, at the heart of the city, to villages in Karnakata) to present site-specific artists' works and creative interventions. To us "World-Information City" represents one of the first attempts at tackling, creatively and with a hybrid approach, the manifold ways in which the arts, technology and society intersect in the city of Bangalore.



AGAINST HERITAGE  
ACHAL PRABHALA

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MONUMENTAL FEELINGS

In the recent past, the militant group ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, has taken over a significant portion of West Asia, murdered and executed an unspecified large number of people, and dragged hordes of impressionable jihadists from everywhere into its murky depths. Last year, a top ISIL commander, armed with a semi-automatic and decked up in camouflage, was caught lecturing his warriors from a Hello Kitty notebook. After looting and pillaging their way through Libya, Iraq and Syria, in the course of which various minor and major sites of Islamic antiquity were destroyed, they finally did it: they took over Palmyra—the site of major Western heritage, the potential destruction of which will be unforgivable. As unforgivable, in fact, as the Taliban's dynamiting of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, in 2001, since everyone agrees that the Buddha is now more or less a European god. Never mind that Western history, much of which is located in Muslim West Asia, isn't actually acknowledged as such; never mind that the first time most people heard of the Bamiyan Buddhas is when they were blown up; ISIS is destroying our heritage and that's a bad, bad thing—and they are bad, bad people to be doing this to us.

Two months ago, I was witness to another act of wanton iconoclasm in another part of the world. Students and workers at the oppressively white University of Cape Town (which has held out against the reality of South Africa as much as The Mother City) brought down a statue of British mining magnate and African colonizer Cecil John Rhodes that had blighted their campus for the last 80 years. It started with a

simple act. An angry student, Chumani Maxwele, flung human poo at the statue, and one month later—after thousands joined him in protest, and after the event became headline news in the country—Rhodes was gone. He had vanished, like he was never there; trussed up in plastic sheets, hauled away by a crane, lurching mid-air under tight straps as if he were a common drunk—instead of merely the hugely annoying imperialist who seized land the size of two countries and trampled upon everyone within. This act of vandalism did not generate anything close to the same level of outrage: even those who privately admired Rhodes knew full well that he was a publicly certified bad man whose time had passed. Grumpy white elders grumpily defended his legacy; fiery black intellectuals took to the classroom to incite revolution; the media decided it was all for the best; and last week, for his pains in sparking this nationwide movement for the decolonization of education, the iconoclast got what was coming to him: I read that Maxwele had been suspended from the University of Cape Town.



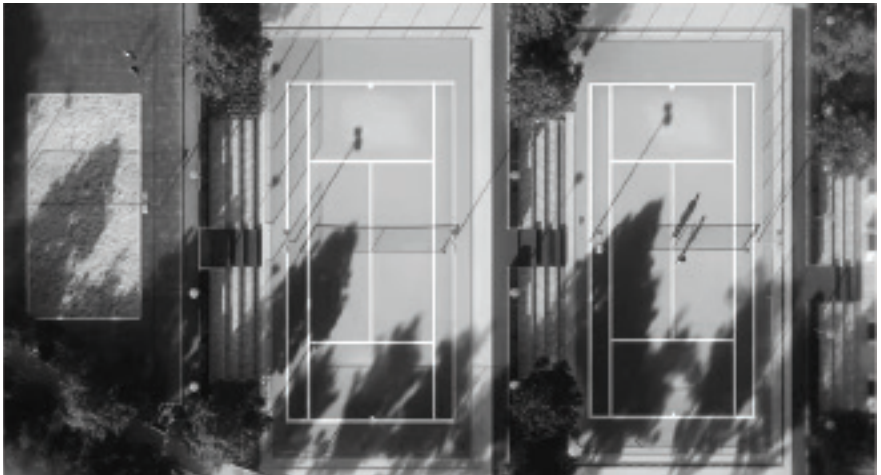
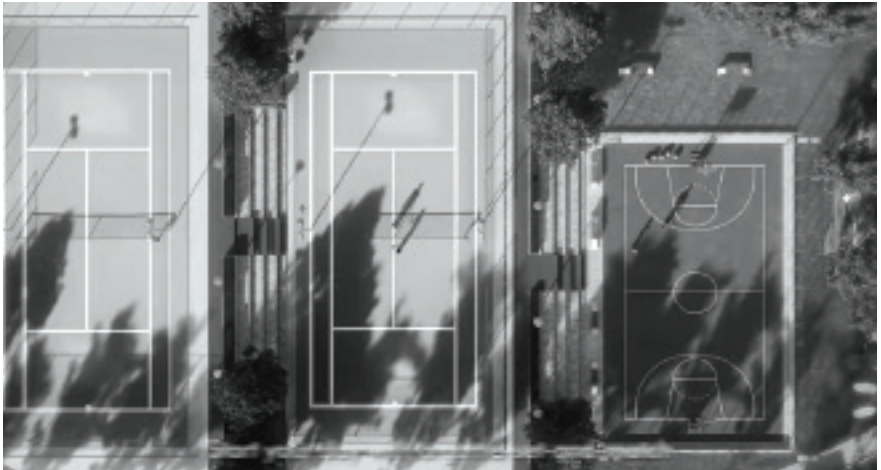
Last month, early in the morning, I ran through Cubbon Park in Bengaluru—one of the two famed “lungs” of the city I live in. The roads were quiet, and not just

because it was 6 a.m. on a Sunday. The center of the city had been cordoned off for a 10-kilometers run, in which 25,000 people participated, the fastest of them, as usual, from Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda. I passed a statue that I've grown up with—and without: the mighty Queen Victoria, glumly holding the world in one hand, her hips rakishly slanted and suspiciously thin (especially in contrast to her ample face) as though she were contemplating another round of liposuction. Normally, pigeons roost on every part of her surface they can, streaking her face and body in slimy white slop, rendering her unrecognizable. The queen's statue is an unfailingly jolly sight, her bonkers life now extended, in one little corner of her domain, by a bonkers afterlife. It's as The King decreed: the long arc of the universe does bend towards justice—if justice entails being infinitely imprisoned under piles of pigeon excrement.

## DIRTY PRETTY THINGS

One night, about 20 years ago, a mysterious fire engulfed a warren of rooms called Begum Mahal and reduced a beloved institution to dust. I was heartbroken. I grew up in a home by Ulsoor Lake, in the heart of Bangalore Cantonment, about 100 meters from Begum Mahal, and the building featured significantly in my life. That it's gone will surely come as a surprise to anyone who navigates the city by word or map; the removal of the physical structure has necessitated no change in what the area is called. This Begum Mahal, the name of a crucial four-road intersection that lives beyond the narrow possibilities of its physical origin, is now the site of the Hilton, a hulking tower of a hotel crowned by a helipad. Of course, as an endlessly litigated and complexly sub-contracted space, Begum Mahal would have been nothing less than a bureaucratic impossibility to take over legally. The story of how it was seized is the stuff of real estate legend, involving the usual characters deploying the usual

tactics and leaving no trace, except perhaps, whatever some bright young investigator with her finger on the pulse of the Right to Information Act will unearth some day.



I miss Begum Mahal because with it went a whole life. Not exactly my life, I should add, since my family was middle-class, but nevertheless one I participated in. Begum Mahal was squarely working class, a place to stop for tea and sympathy between long bus journeys, a place to hire a horse-drawn tonga at a short notice, even, remarkably, a place to say a

quick prayer in a multitude of faiths. It was a place of convenience and conviviality; a public space for public people, which is to say, a private arrangement for people who couldn't afford private comfort. Begum Mahal was made by working-class people for others of their kind, and then one day, it was taken over by upper-class people to be turned into a utility for their kind. Despite being remarkably central, and therefore potentially valuable, the Ulsoor Lake of my misspent youth was topsy-turvy. Big houses, like the one I lived in, existed alongside grimy automobile workshops and backyard chicken farms. One side of the lake had respectable middle-class homes; another side had a



large Indian army base; one corner was given over to public educational institutions run by the redoubtable Rai Bahadur Arcot Narrainswamy Mudaliar Educational Charities Trust; another corner led to the crowded Ulsoor market, which housed people from every single income bracket possible.

The past hasn't been obliterated yet. Much is as it was, which means that when the Hilton hotel opens for business (construction began exactly as world markets slumped in 2007, and therefore stalled for many years), it will find itself both the site of one of

the city's busiest informal transport hubs, as well as the entryway to a bustling vegetable market whose layout has remained unchanged for centuries. And it has no reason to be nervous; it has company, in the form of four other luxury hotels, all of impeccable international reputation, which precede its entry into the area.

Here comes the neighborhood.

When upstanding, upper-class people in Bengaluru lament the loss of their heritage, they are not talking about Begum Mahal. When they celebrate the city's heritage, they are not talking about Shivajinagar, an area designed to be the servants' quarters of the British Empire, where the beauty is ancient but modest and functional, and so tightly packed between people and goods—and so defiantly ungentrifiable—that you hardly notice it. What are they talking about? The good protectors mean something like Victoria Hotel,



a sprawling property that sat on Residency Road, in the commercial center of the city. Victoria Hotel was a lazily-run establishment that served indifferent food in great atmosphere (a late-Victorian-style cottage) and allowed its clients to bring their dogs to dinner,





all the better to be sucked dry by mosquitoes while waiting it out in the lawns. When it was knocked down—at about the same time as Begum Mahal went up in flames—and replaced by a giant mall, some of my best friends lost their minds (that mall has long been in operation, and while it looks apocalyptic, it employs about a hundred times more people than Victoria Hotel ever did). The selfsame protectors huddle at the Bangalore Club, the city's most exclusive subsidy for the rich, and hope that everything they hold dear—the immaculately laid out 150-year-old pile set in acres of manicured gardens—won't be torn down. Where would we be, after all, if Winston Churchill's unpaid bills from 1899—now obsequiously displayed at the entrance to the dining room—were to disappear? (Rumor has it that in 1991, the president of the club was showing Prince Charles the exhibit, when, bowing too enthusiastically and too often, he hit his head on the table that housed Churchill's bills and passed out).

I like late-Victorian architecture. I particularly like its tropical mutations; the monkey-tops to keep the monkeys out, the stingy little windows to keep the cool air in, the Arabesque patterns on the floors to keep the slaves busy. I've been taken as a guest to

the Bangalore Club plenty of times, and invariably enjoyed myself (other people's subsidies are easier to be hypocritical about when you can occasionally have them). And yet, I think civilization would only benefit by burning the place down and starting again. Bengaluru's heritage hysteries are a smokescreen: what the fine people are fighting to protect is class control. Make no mistake. In a city where you can move from being working-class to middle-class in the space of a day, where, at long last, opportunity actually exists, this is a war against mobility.

## HERITAGE IS BAD PEOPLE

Heritage is the ultimate revenge of the rich: history reflected in a fun-house mirror and dipped in liquid nitrogen to make the distortion last. Heritage is a means of denying that history is made—and remade—every minute of every day in every part of the world. Heritage is an attempt to lock time up in shiny tinsel wrapping; an attempt to disguise accidents of fortune as noble intention. Heritage is the pretense that the cobblestoned streets of some quaint European city whose only economy is a tattered illusion of itself are somehow superior to the dynamically heaving roads of the third world megalopolis. Heritage is a plot to distract you from noticing that Bengaluru became a far nicer place to live in once it began offering hope and looking like shit.

IMAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY TARA KELTON

(FOUND IMAGES FROM 3D-RENDERED "WALK THROUGH" VIDEOS OF GATED COMMUNITIES PRODUCED BY REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS IN BANGALORE)



# ART AFTER FAILURE: AN ARTISTIC MANIFESTO FROM THE CITY OF BANGALORE IOCOSE

## TWO JUSTIFICATIONS

This piece has the purpose of providing two extensive justifications. First, it attempts to explain why we, as a collective, have spent a period conducting artistic research in Bangalore, India. Bangalore is in fact undoubtedly far from the main geographical area where our work is normally based (that is Europe and the so called Western world, for the most part). Secondly, it proposes to justify our presence in the context of contemporary artistic production. This text is a report of our trip and a manifesto of our practice, both of which will merge together to justify our place and role in the world.

While interrogating our own artistic production, we want to define its style and ethos within what we tentatively name the Post Fail. As in Post Internet, here 'post' means many different things at the same time. First, our art orbits around the 'after failure' moment of the teleological narratives of technological development, in regards to both their enthusiastic and pessimistic visions. We assume that, in the long run, both utopian and dystopian narratives will disappoint, leaving us with much more mundane and varied realities. For example, we have recently approached drones and unmanned vehicles of different kinds. In recent times, these technologies have become common-use products, mostly sold as toys. But drones are also presented by advertisers and enthusiasts as one of the most relevant technologies of the near future, as we are now allegedly leading towards a world in which deliveries and civil surveillance, movie production and warfare, will all be carried out by and thanks to drones. In this case, we prefer to focus not exactly on the promise itself, but on the

present moment in which we can already imagine that what we are told (mostly by the sellers of those technologies) is unlikely to happen, and definitely not through a smooth and uniform process.

Secondly, Post Fail also signifies that our art should be understood as taking place after acknowledging the failure of many of the post-whatever theories of the last decades. Many of the discourses that have been trying to make sense of contemporary art through a post-whatever condition, that we should all allegedly be sharing, have been hiding many of the contradictions and complexities of the present moment, of the when and where of their formulation. We want to investigate the complexities of the present more than anything else, including our own involvement in the production of discourses about such notion of the present. We find it difficult not to consider that what we do happens in a specific time, and that even if we talk about the future or the past we always do it from a specific temporal, cultural and geographical context. Post Fail means, as it will be argued, acknowledging the temporality of enunciation and the bodies it solicits and involves.

Finally, Post Fail might mean, perhaps with a slightly ironical twist, that we, IOCOSE, live and work in a constant state of 'postal failure'. Being dispersed over three different cities, and communicating through e-mail, shared documents, cloud storage and VOIP technologies, we have come to accept the failure of communication as part of our work process. A failure we are perfectly fine with and which we like to dwell in, but that we also need to address when understanding our own practice. Internet is not just part of our everyday lives; it is also the essential condition that makes IOCOSE possible. With no Internet connection we would simply not exist. We are IOCOSE 'during' Internet, not after it (we need to communicate between ourselves to

make things happen) and not before it (we cannot work together without Internet connection). Our art originates from all the misunderstandings, slowness and interruptions that distant communication brings with it.

So, why Bangalore? Why does this city matter in the theorization of the Post Fail? We want to argue that Bangalore is an excellent example to understand and experience the importance of living, thinking and being 'after failure'. In Bangalore the present moments in which the promises about the future of the city are enunciated and narrated matter more than anything else. The present of Bangalore is determined, in its architectural and urban developments and through the introduction of businesses in the area, by a specific vision of the future. From what we experienced, this idea of the future generates immediate contradictions and inequalities, and quite interestingly most of these developments are carried out in the name of the corporations that invest in information technologies. Internet businesses are not just part of the city of Bangalore, but are the engine that drives the city towards a promised future. As Nair (2005) put it in the title of her text, Bangalore offers the "promise of the metropolis". We like to look at Bangalore as a perfect occasion to investigate the present of such promises of technological and economic development, and to remind ourselves that these promises matter, are made of glass and steel that happens now, they move people, money and internet cables around the world that we live in today. Through the notion of Post Fail we intend to respond to all this.

## A CITY WITHIN A CITY

What made Bangalore interesting for us was not the city itself, but the other city that lies within the city of Bangalore. This city-within-a-city is known as

the Electronic City, or E-City. The E-City has been developing since the early Eighties and flourished in the last two decades. It consists of three areas, called Phase 1, 2 and 3, denominations for the successive stages of expansion that the E-City has undergone so far. The E-City hosts buildings and offices of the most important IT companies of the world. Its main purpose is to provide a safe and separated place where IT companies would base their businesses while being far from Bangalore's problems (traffic, smog, etc.).

If Bangalore, with the possible exception of its most luxurious areas, is poor, slow, dirty, old and noisy, the E-City is instead rich, fast, clean, new and silent. Bangalore is chaotic, while the E-City is restrained. The E-City and its surrounding area is where everyone, according to the billboards that surround Bangalore, wants to live. The E-City has in fact a strictly Western style of architecture, a style that is (gated and) branded as luxurious and ambitious. One of the gated communities built around the E-City is called Melrose, and it is in fact constructed in a way that mimics the houses of the famous television series of the same name.<sup>1</sup>

If Bangalore is flat with compounds that extend beyond the records of the official mapping of the city, the E-City is presented as 'elevated'; an elevation of the E-City that is created and constantly reenforced in the advertisements of the real estate agencies. Living in a Californian-style gated community is a way of elevating yourself, as the billboards remind us. The process of self-elevation is not only physical (living on a skyscraper) but also spiritual. It means being detached from the rest of the world. It leads to a successful living, as a famous advertisement

1. Artist Christoph Schäfer conducted research into gated communities and produced a video installation called "Melrose Place\_d in Bangalore" in 2005 (see page 14).



ELEVATED BUILDING



campaign from clothing company Diesel epitomized many years ago.

Many other architectural interventions in the city replicate the semantic opposition between elevation and flatness. The buildings around the E-City, developed to host those who work there, search for the sky, or at least for a physical detachment from the ground. According to an urban legend that we heard more than once while in Bangalore, while the E-City was still in an embryonic stage a prominent IT CEO confessed to the entourage of the mayor of Bangalore that the proximity with the locals was seriously undermining the growth of the IT economy in the area. In fact, the man explicitly suggested building a flyover highway to connect the city center with the new E-City, so that traffic to the business center would be faster. More importantly, he said that you cannot pretend to be a global leader if, between the time you wake up and the time you are at work, you are reminded of the poverty of the people around you. The flyover was suggested as a solution for detaching once and for all the engineers of the IT businesses from the average citizens of Bangalore. The city administration started, immediately after this conversation, the construction of a flyover highway: a little-big architectonic monstrosity that crosses the entire city and functions as a symbolic reminder of how the efficiency of production can go hand in hand with class discrimination.

The Bangalore "Elevated Tollway", built along Hosur Road, is part of the more extended National Highway number 7. The tollway connects the area Silk Board and the E-City and crosses a good part of the city, by passing over it. The toll costs approximately 70 Indian Rupees. Not much, but enough to exclude the less wealthy citizens. In about ten minutes it lets you cross an area that would otherwise take more than an hour, because of the traffic and poor conditions of



the streets. It extends for more than 10 km and was inaugurated in 2010, less than five years ago.

The elevated tollway is born out of a dream for smooth transportation deprived of unexpected hindrances. In a similar fashion, the companies of the E-City base their entire business on the ability to communicate with offices in California, Europe or Asia, through data transmission that must not be altered by noise of any kind. It is easy to draw a comparison between the modalities of work of the E-City and the elevated tollway. In both cases contaminations, disturbances and unplanned alterations are unwanted. As the global leaders of the E-City keep their 'status' uncontaminated throughout the day, so the work produced within the E-City has to be sent and received without corruption of any kind.

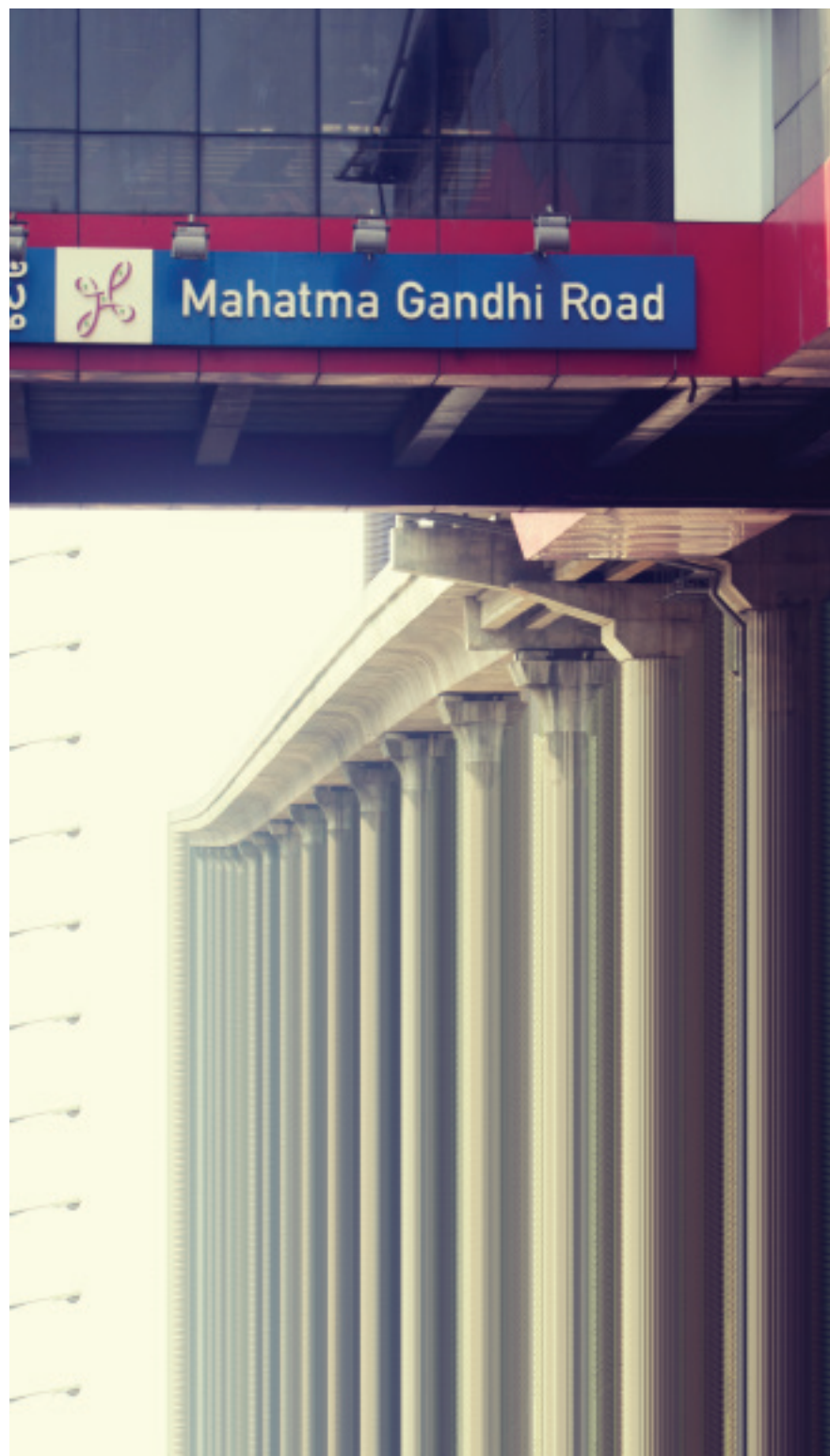
It is not a coincidence that the E-City is extraordinarily clean. The entrance to the office area is surrounded by a gate, and access is restricted to the workers and their family members. However, it is possible to see from the outside that around the offices and within the gated space there are plenty of green areas, with fountains and flat roads. None of these things can usually be found in the rest of the city (apart from the botanical gardens).

It is quite clear from a few visits that in Bangalore Internet still 'matters'. Internet, and particularly information technology businesses, here generates an economy that is visible from the architecture and distribution in the city area of the various social classes. Internet changes the shape of the city of Bangalore. It also changes the dreams and expectations of the population. However, the dreams associated with the digital revolution of Bangalore have to do with the expectations of a clean, smooth, fluid Californian style of living, a possibility that can be achieved only through elevation and detachment (by moving on a





ELEVATED METRO



highway, living on a skyscraper, working in a gated office and so on).

Indeed, the contradictions of Bangalore are not more or less profound than those one can also find in European societies, where the four of us are born and raised and are currently living. However, here in Bangalore these are immediately visible to our foreign eyes. One could just look at the configuration of the city to see how the presence of IT industries is shaping the metropolis. Most of the development of Bangalore is driven by the E-City. In Bangalore, Internet is not strictly speaking a new thing, but incessantly produces new highways, skyscrapers and enclosed communities.

## THE PROBLEM WITH THE NEW THINGS

"Not to lie about the future is impossible and one can lie about it at will" —Naum Gabo, quoted by Barbrook and Cameron, 1996

In the seminal essay "The Californian Ideology", Barbrook and Cameron effectively pointed out how the development of an Internet economy is far from being a purely economic and technological shift. It is entwined with ideological statements that have been the basis for a new kind of liberalism, one that puts the individual, and a certain idea of personal freedom, at its center.

Produced around a vision of the future, such ideology appears to be oriented towards a future collective condition in which anyone, from anywhere in the world, will be able to express herself thanks to online and digital technologies. However, as the authors argue, narratives about the future have a strong ideological force because they overlook the partiality of the speaker. By offering a prediction on what the future could be, they become persuasive strate-

gies about what should be done in the present. They influence the political economy of the present. And in Bangalore (often defined to outsiders as the Silicon Valley of India), a specific narrative of the future has been used to enforce a neo-liberal economy based on infrastructure investments.

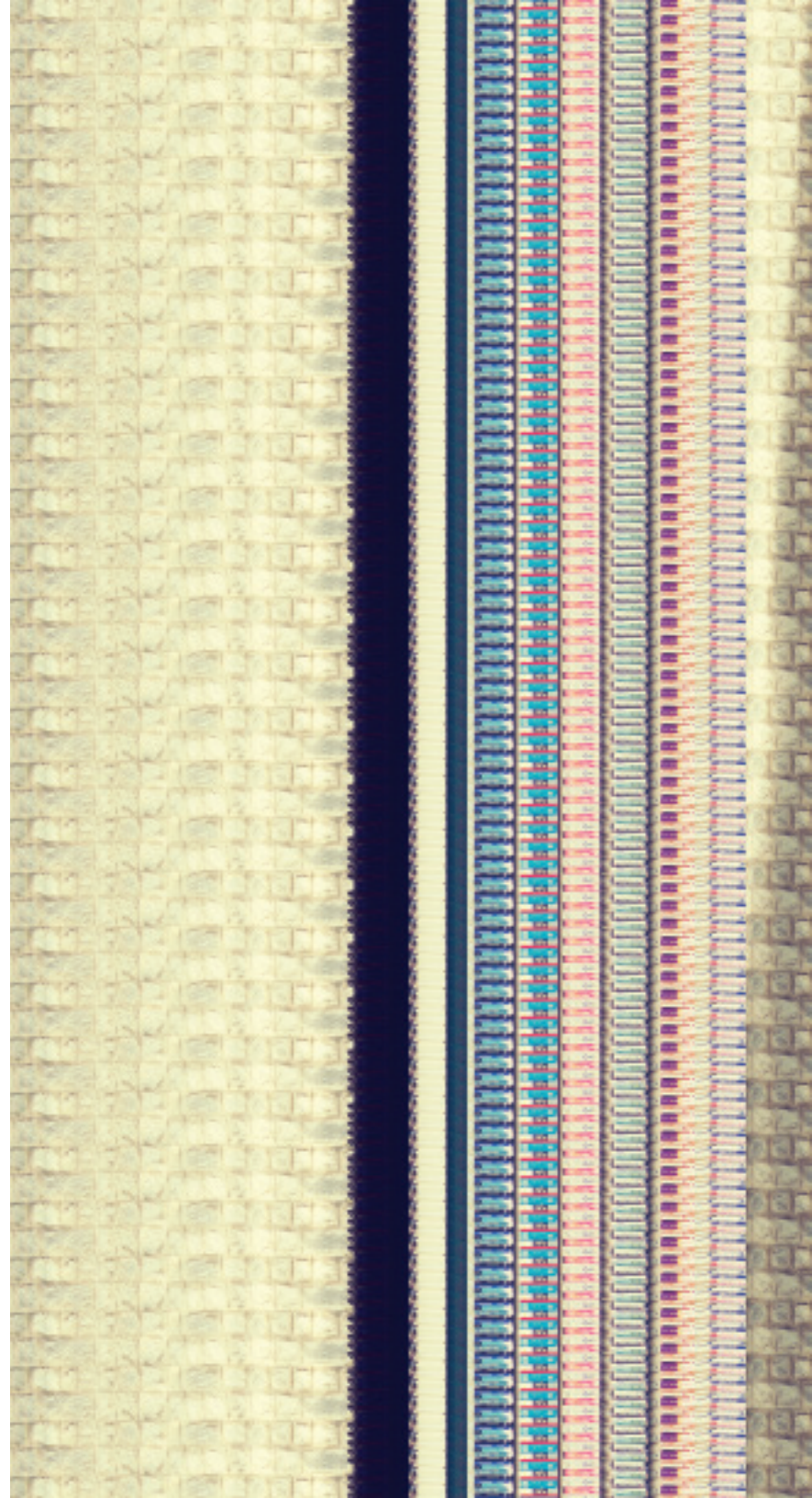
The narrative of the future that is changing the city of Bangalore suggests, for example, that one should commute to the E-City by 'flying over' the rest of the city, using a purposefully built tolled highway. We can compare this to similar arguments that have been proposed to drive and manipulate policy changes in the immediate present. If we think of the drones' phenomenon, we are often told that because drones will soon deliver parcels to our flats their use must be liberalized now (possibly also allowing surveillance companies and urban police to deploy a soon-to-be-familiar technology in our cities). We are also told that in the future every movement of our body will be monitored and tracked to prevent health issues, therefore quantified-self technologies must be financed and marketed now, so as to allow the future to happen. Those who tell these stories tend to appear as neutral speakers, sometimes supported by supposedly scientific facts to prove their point (TED talks are an excellent example of this rhetoric in which data is that which allows a transparent view into the future). The apparent neutrality of these discourses on the future of technological progression encourages immediate changes; changes that are far from neutral and affect the lives of many.

Bangalore is a clear example of a future that happens in the present time, and with tangible effects. The linearity of technological, economic and social progress is presented by specific actors who often have specific interests. And the idea of a 'post-whatever' works in a similar way. As theoretical gesture, the post-whatever tells us the story of a historical development along



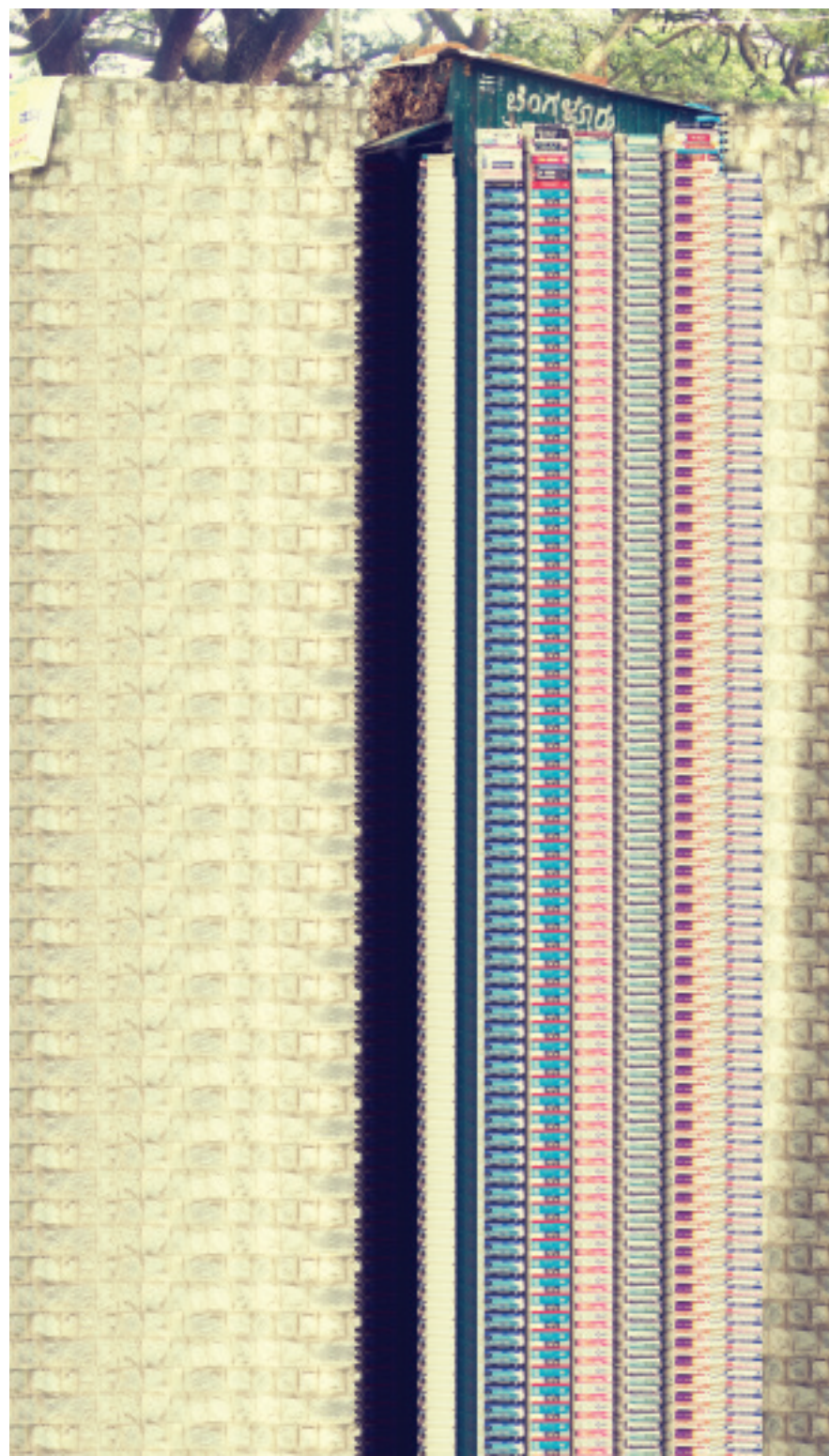
ELEVATED BOOKSTAND













with that of an imaginary future towards which a certain number of people are heading. Any post-what-ever, when used to delineate a linear historical narrative of cause-effect relations, imagines time as following a clear progressive path, from the past towards a future condition.

## THE PROBLEM WITH THE POST-INTERNET

Discourses around post-whatever of any kind need to be interpreted within a political critique. And given our role as artists we want to contextualize our presence and role in the context of contemporary artistic production in relation to another post-whatever, the Post-Internet discourse.

We can take as a starter the seminal text by artist Artie Vierkant "The Image Object Post-Internet" (2010). Here Post-Internet art is defined as "a result of the contemporary moment: inherently informed by ubiquitous authorship, the development of attention as currency, the collapse of physical space in networked culture, and the infinite reproducibility and mutability of digital materials". In Vierkant's text there seems to be a clear understanding of the contemporary moment. Internet is, in this context, taken for granted, considered as a given which has now permeated the lives of a generation. The idea of the author is to adapt our perception and artistic production towards this new condition which we are all allegedly sharing, blurring the separation between images and objects in a scenario in which the image of the artwork is in fact already the artwork.

Similarly, critic David Joselit, in "After Art" (2013), presents what he considers to be the contemporary mode of production and fruition of images. This condition has, according to the author, changed the evaluation of art and artworks. His text starts by quoting in the first page a comment that Donald

Rubell, an art collector, made to the New York Times. Rubell says that "people are now realizing that art is an international currency", as quoted in Joselit. This over-generic statement about what people are now doing is not critiqued by Joselit, but used instead as the rationale for proposing a new mode of doing art: "what results after the "era of art" is a new kind of power that art assembles through its heterogeneous formats". According to artist Jesse Darling (and theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff), the 'post' of Post-Internet indicates that art happens at "the crisis of" the Internet, not as a successor to it. Also, Darling (2014) states that "every artist working today is a postinternet artist".

Indeed, Post-Internet can also be interpreted differently. 'Post' can also mean, maybe more simply, "doing art after being online", as proposed by artist Marisa Olson in the original formulation of the Post-Internet (Cornell, 2006). Post-Internet can also be seen, more broadly, as also including the new forms taken by the artistic investigations started by the net art movement, which tend to avoid replicating similar narratives of historical progression, at the cost maybe of being less accepted by the art market (Quaranta, 2015). What we want to stress is that the works of authors such as Vierkant, Joselit and Darling tend to generate universal narratives of temporal and technological progression. Most importantly, they do not reflect on the plurality of things that the Internet 'does', and instead they speculate on what the Internet supposedly is. It should appear quite obvious, for example, that art is a currency mostly for people like David Rubell, quoted by Joselit, and probably also for some of his friends. For the rest of the world it simply is not. In other words, these stories about who and where we are now, and what we are all doing, these common-sense visions of our engagement with art and media hide the fact that someone is telling these stories, and that the act of telling them is embedded



ELEVATED SHED



in a political, cultural, economic scenario which is far from being obvious, or given.

What we are arguing is that Post-Internet as a movement, as varied and complex as it is, might work for the context of art criticism (particularly in those cases when it is presented also for its theoretical limitations). What is most worrying, for us, is how theories on the Post-Internet appear to derive from a common-sense understanding of how the world is, how it works and how we live in it. Of course, the common-sense logic is helpful when trying to make things simple and accessible to our understanding. But, within these conditions, we are going to prefer the 'misunderstandings': the failures, the disappointments, the events that complicate our expectations of what the Internet, technologies and human beings are doing, or could be doing.

For these reasons we are much more comfortable with less authoritative claims and less generalizing perspectives. Bangalore shows that the Internet is not a fact that we all share, and not in the same way. It generates different things, for different people, depending on where they live, their social status, and the sort of access they have to education.

## BEING POST FAIL: ART AFTER FAILURE

What does it mean then, to be Post Fail? We propose a sort of manifesto, which also works as a guideline and summary – being Post Fail and doing art 'after failure' means:

· TO ACCEPT THAT THE FUTURE IS (ALWAYS?)  
A STORY WE TELL OURSELVES IN THE PRESENT TIME, AND A STORY THAT IS FORMULATED IN SPECIFIC MOMENTS AND RECEIVED VIA SPECIFIC BODIES THAT ARE LOCATED IN HISTORY

· TO ACCEPT THAT THESE VERY VISIONS OF THE FUTURE WILL SOMEHOW DISAPPOINT, BE THEY APOCALYPTIC OR AS ENTHUSIASTIC DISCOURSES, BECAUSE THERE IS NOT ONE SINGLE DIRECTION WE ARE GOING IN— AND PROBABLY WE ARE NOT EVEN GOING ANYWHERE

· TO ACCEPT THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE OF DOING ART WHILE RECOGNIZING THE LIMITATIONS OF ONE'S OWN POSITION IN THE WORLD AND IN HISTORY, YET WHILE STILL SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT THE OTHER POSSIBILITIES IN WHICH OUR OWN PRESENT MIGHT ALSO BE

· TO DO ART AS IF BEING DJS AT A PARTY, BUT DJS WHO ARE ALREADY FEELING THE HANGOVER OF THAT SAME PARTY. THESE DJS-WITH-A-HEADACHE HAVE THE IMPERATIVE TO KEEP THE MUSIC GOING: THEY HAVE TO TAKE CARE SOMEHOW OF THE TENSION TOWARDS THE COLLECTIVE JOY OF THE PARTY WHILE KNOWING THAT, SURELY, EVERYONE WILL LEAVE AND GO IN A SEPARATE DIRECTION AT THE VERY END. DOING ART POST FAIL MEANS ASKING OURSELVES THE QUESTION OF WHAT MUSIC IS APPROPRIATE TO PLAY IN SUCH A CONTEXT, HOW TO RESPECT ONE'S OWN HEADACHE WHILE GIVING AN INTERESTING (AND POSSIBLY ENJOYABLE) EXPERIENCE.

There are several examples of this attitude in our production. To mention a few, the "NoTube Contest" series for instance offers an award to whoever manages to find the most valueless video on YouTube. The contest is about the incredible amount of useless videos published and saved on YouTube and it acknowledges that YouTube is also, and maybe mostly, about those useless videos with zero views and yet the

contest tries to take care of these same videos with no value, by respecting and re-evaluating them for what they are.

The "In Times of Peace" series imagines the life of a drone in a fictional time when war and terror are over. The impossibility of imagining such life is a way of reflecting on the difficulty of envisioning a time of peace. Yet the project takes care of such imagining of an impossible future by dignifying a lonely drone that at least tries to do something for itself (such as running a 100 meters race, or taking selfies).

The series "A Contemporary Portrait of the Internet Artist" offers a glimpse on the multiple meanings of making art, nowadays, in the so-called age of the Internet. It also exposes the not so enthusiastic reality of what many artists do nowadays (such as crowd/outsourcing work, working at the boundaries of copyright infringement, exploiting or being exploited by other artists and companies, etc.). The series tries to imagine how such a complex network of relations that come to be associated with 'Internet art' could be represented in a portrait, still using those same numerous forms of production and consumption that online technologies allow.

The photographic series we created for Silicon Plateau #1, "Elevated Bangalore", also reflects these approaches and acts as a proposal for an art after failure. The series is an evidently distorted reportage from the city of Bangalore. In the photos, one sees buildings, vehicles and constructions of different sorts (including the Elevated Tollway) stretched towards the sky. It is the dream of an elevated Bangalore that we propose to take as literally as possible, by lengthening (or enlightening, as Microsoft Word's AutoCorrect is now suggesting?) even the most humble rickshaw of the Indian

driver who might be dreaming of achieving, one day, the elevation so noticeably promoted by the billboards all over Bangalore.

Clearly the rhetoric of elevation used by the real estate business in Bangalore is anything but democratic, instead it is another way of promoting division and unfairness. With "Elevated Bangalore" we are trying to join in the blatant artificiality of the promises of technological and social progress that many IT companies are now replicating in Bangalore. Promises that sound similar to those used to discuss and promote digital software such as Photoshop, used to alter these images, and often advertised as tools that have changed our ways of seeing the world. The dream of an elevated Bangalore might actually improve the lives of the citizens of the city. What matters now, for us, is how this tension towards elevation generates a sort of collective hallucination, a hallucination which is also tangible throughout the city. We believe that such hallucinations need to be addressed through a Post Fail approach, one that acknowledges and takes responsibility of the place and time of its intervention, accepts its limitations and yet, somehow, still tries to play the music.

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ELEVATED SKYSCRAPER



## A MAN, A WOMAN AND SOME GOOD ADVICE ANIL MENON

I suppose most of us disappoint ourselves in bits and pieces, busily whittling away at the raw wood of possibility, until we emerge fully ruined and completely unrepresentative of the person we had hoped to be. Fortunately, by then we are usually dead.

It was my birthday. I was entitled to my dark thoughts.

This year Elizabeth had gifted me Jerry Weinberg's *The Secrets of Consulting*. Since I was a software consultant, it was bit like giving a dentist a book on dental hygiene. But as the maxim goes, it is the thought that counts. I simulated cries of delight.

"Are you disappointed?" asked Elizabeth.

Who ever grows up wanting to be a consultant? And yet the world is filled with the pests. I was one of them. In fact I was scheduled for a three-week trip to Bengaluru. Laptops here, laptops there.

I'd had other dreams. As a lifelong inhabitant of large cities, first Mumbai, then Delhi, later San Francisco, and now Chicago, I'd grown up with a faith in giants.

I was to be a great metropolis, metaphorically speaking, with a bejeweled skyline and a manageable crime rate, guided tours and crowded bazaars, eloping lovers and pigeons taking flight. What fantastic combination of choices and journeys had led me from childhood to consultancy?

I assured my wife that the book was rumored to be a classic, practically the software world's *Art of War*. I'd been intending to read the book forever, but somehow never had had the opportunity. Now I could read it on the flight to Bengaluru.

"Love you."

"Love you. Happy birthday, sweetie."

Later, on the flight from Heathrow to Bengaluru, tiring of watching movies, I reached for Elizabeth's gift.

Jerry Weinberg's book turned out to be a tedious

delight. I trudged through its pages on the flight to Bengaluru, admiring the clear prose but not entirely certain his advice justified the slaughter of trees. There were deep insights ('It may look like a crisis but it's only the end of an illusion') bracketed with platitudes ('To be able to say yes to yourself as a consultant, be able to say no to any of your clients') and dubious hokum ('The best way to lose something is to struggle to keep it'). It wasn't a bad book and judging from Weinberg's smiling visage on the cover ('Spend at least one day a week getting exposure'), he seemed to think so too.

Still, the book made the flight to Bengaluru more pleasant. It was even inspiring. In the taxi I found myself leaning forward, which I took to be an auspicious sign of my eagerness to work with LTI Shoes.

LTI Shoes was having supply-chain problems. It was software-related, and since I'd worked at the company that had sold them the software, they were hoping for a quick fix on the cheap. That wasn't going to happen ('The less they pay you, the less they respect you') and though I looked forward to the negotiation ('Price is not a thing, it's a negotiated relationship'), I wasn't too keen on the idea of spending the next three weeks in a hotel. It would be clean and comfortable, perhaps even fancy, but in India, I'd always felt it only advertized the lack of family. What, staying at a hotel, sir? No family? I'd also learnt that the bars were open only up to eleven-thirty. There was no question of drinking alone in my hotel room. That left masturbation, another tedious delight.

Elizabeth found the last bit amusing, but wasn't overly sympathetic. She had her own woes. She was spending the week with our twins in Sandpoint, Idaho; that is, she was busy thwarting her mother's ongoing efforts to baptize our little heathens and thus secure them a twin-bed room in Christian heaven.

"How do we end up in these situations?" I heard

Elizabeth sigh over the phone.

Weinberg had a rule to cover that of course ('Many a mickle makes a muckle'), but I loved my wife and so spared her the cold wisdom.

"Tell your mother she can have one kid to save. We need the other one to look after us in hell." I was pleased to hear Elizabeth laugh.

Bannerghata road was exactly as I'd remembered it—a long, narrow, poorly-paved road bordered on both sides with ramshackle aggregates of low-ceilinged buildings ranging from one floor to a maximum of four floors. The taxi ride from my boutique hotel in Koramangala seemed to last forever, but I knew it was because we were only crawling along and the brain measured space as it did achievement, in terms of distance traveled. The actual distance was quite small, probably just a dozen kilometers or so.

All around me was the irregular commonplace. No doubt there was enough going on to keep an entire university of scholars busy for several decades, but it seemed to me that Weinberg had already discovered the definitive summary: 'Things are the way they are because they got that way.' My Guru had attached Gertrude Stein's maxim as a corollary: history teaches history teaches. Maybe so, but no one in Bengaluru seemed to be paying any attention.

The project lead at LTI shoes was a young south-Indian woman, about my age. Kaveri Iyer and I hit it off immediately.

"Your pellet pick-up code is terrible," she said. 'I don't think you understand Java threading at all.'

"What's Java?"

Utter shock. Kaveri began to explain, then laughed.

"You never know with so-called consultants," she explained, almost defensively. 'I've had SAP experts who don't know what a business object is, software architects who've never heard of aspect programming, OOP programmers who can't tell you the difference between an interface and an abstract class. Six weeks in some Kannadiga sweatshop and

every joker is instantly a developer. I tell you.”  
Actually, I’d come out of one of those sweatshops, not IIT-Madras as she had, but I soon realized Kaveri was entitled to her snobbishness. She really knew her stuff. It is never fun to do a code walkthrough with a colleague, especially when the code is one’s own and the colleague is an adversary. It was different with Kaveri. I enjoyed the verbal sparring, her put-downs, her rapid-fire typing, the tugging at the front of her white shirt when she encountered code that thrilled her. She had the techie’s suspicion of people with overly-good English (“do you have MBA?”) but I must have passed muster because she stopped testing me.

At one point, Kaveri got up and returned with a cup of coffee and some cream biscuits. Her body-language strongly advised me to consider it an act of courtesy. But I was startled for another reason. I was sure her white shirt had had only one undone button. Now there were two. Consultants don’t miss things like that.

Kaveri had nothing of Elizabeth’s slim Episcopal elegance. She could stand to lose a few pounds. Her hair had split ends, she’d neglected her nails, she looked beat, and she didn’t seem to know she had a lovely smile. But I couldn’t stop staring. At one point she reached over a desk to adjust the monitor, and I instantly imagined taking her from behind. All that lovely ass.

All men are opportunistic dogs, yes. I was indiscriminate in the manner of my species. With Kaveri however, there was more than the usual canine helplessness. I liked her. I sensed she liked me too. There’s no reason for these things (Weinberg: ‘We may run out of energy, or air, or water, or food, but we’ll never run out of reasons’). We could have commuted in the same train for a decade without ever discovering this truth about ourselves. It was physical, but no, it wasn’t physical.

She was a gifted project-lead, one of those people who

facilitate change by providing a rock-like stability (Weinberg: 'Cucumbers get more pickled than brine gets cucumbered'). She settled conflicts, wasn't afraid of confrontation and had high standards.

When we checked the time, it was already well past lunch. This section of the Bannerghata road didn't have too many vegetarian joints. The best of the lousy options was a Pizza hut. Three weeks of pizza. She must have sensed my gloom.

"Veggie?" she asked, and when I nodded, she added: "Lunch is too bad, but you can have dinner at my place. I live in Hosur. Up to you."

Hosur wasn't far from Koramangala. Perhaps I looked too relieved because she quickly added: "I'm not a great cook or anything so don't get hopes up."

It became a pattern. Work like demented golums, yak yak, drive to her 3-BHK apartment, more yak yak, eat her competent south-Indian meals, then still more yak-yak. I stretched out on the futon, she would sit cross-legged on the floor. The first evening Kaveri stayed in her work clothes, but thereafter she relaxed and changed into her evening rags. She had three nightdresses and a pair of knee-length shorts. I could soon tell the weekday of the week with an error of plus or minus one by what she chose to wear. We watched TV, mostly American shows. Yak, yak. Ten o'clock. Eleven. Then the channels would start to focus on the noble American pastime—improving fat people— and because rickshaws were hard to get that time of the night, she'd give me a ride to the hotel. She had the desi's dislike of being thanked for generosity, and made faces or rolled her eyes when I tried to do so.

The third evening, as she got busy with the food, I used the opportunity to snoop around her apartment. Technical books. A book on erotic Indian poetry: *Grow Long Blessed Night*. But mostly, row upon row of SF books. Mostly authors I'd never heard of. I marveled at some of the Indian names, suppressed an old ache. There was a money plant, photos of



unsmiling seniors, an invasion of cushions. No gods and goddesses, which was a bit unusual. A dusty sitar rested on the floor, next to a small side-table with a framed photo. I examined the photograph. Happy guy, happy Kaveri.

"Husband?" I asked, as she entered.

"Aiiyyo, no. Just a deallocated object that hasn't been garbage collected yet."

The insider's joke contained a small tragedy. She'd been in a relationship for seven years with some donkey. Four years at the IIT-Madras, two years at a startup, one unhappy year at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, and then she'd decided to do a Master's at Urbana-Champaign. The donkey had balked. He had wanted marriage, kids, a life in India. It hadn't worked out. Neither had the plans for a Master's. Seven fucking years.

"Holy crap, you were at IIT-Madras!" I said, as if that was the takeaway from her story. I explained I'd gone to Chennai in '06 for TechMasti, IIT-M's tech festival.

"I was one of the organizers of the fest! We might have met!"

Our meeting now seemed fated somehow. When Kaveri learned I was married to a white woman, I felt she disapproved. I felt it evident in her overly bright: oh, how nice!

At first I was irritated, then it struck me that I shared her discomfort. A part of me had never quite reconciled with the way things had turned out. That part of me dreaded going to India with Elizabeth. It resented my twins' American accents. It ached to drown in brown. I no longer trusted myself. Not entirely. Perhaps Kaveri sensed this exile from myself, because she changed the topic:

"Do you like science-fiction?"

I suppose every relationship eventually has to survive this question. My guru, Jerry Weinberg, has an entire chapter on avoiding questions one doesn't wish to answer. I glanced at her face, lambent with

enthusiasm.

"I can take it or leave it," I said cautiously.

"Why don't you like it?"

I again tried to waffle, but it was clear she didn't understand how waffling worked. My guru was of no help. Finally, prodded and cornered into honesty, I began to rant. Science-fiction, science-fiction. I loathed science-fiction. It was the stupidest way to think about technology. Technology wasn't about finding new ways to rape the natural world. Time-travel, my ass. Seriously? If we could zip back and forth in time, nothing could ever be poignant. Irreversibility was what made things human. And how come the aliens never landed in Kampala or Chennai or Koramangala? And what was so alien about them anyway? God, I had it with humans in alien blackface. And why did the future have no colored people? White people here, white people there, white people everywhere. Just look at the movie Gravity. Just one colored guy and he was killed off as soon as possible. Pathetic! In truth, for all its sanctimonious hypocritical blather about human universals, science-fiction was first and last about the colonial gaze. Worst of all, science-fiction had so colonized our minds, we couldn't imagine the future except in its chutiya terms. Just look at Bengaluru. "My god, there's no connection!" flared Kaveri. "I read SF and I am not colonized. You're trying to make people feel ashamed of what they love. That's colonization. Okay, I love french fries and wearing western clothes. So? I also love filter-coffee and saris. You sound like the RSS. All that British stuff is in the past. Get over it. It's all in your attitude. Be progressive, dude!"

"Oh yes, progress," I said, darkly. "Hmm, I wonder which branch of literature sold you that idea?"

"You just haven't read the right SF. Asimov isn't the only author. Have you read Philip Dick?"

"Nope."

Kaveri continued to harass me with more names, her

expression alternating between disbelief and pity. Then she got up and extracted a number of volumes from her shelf. Read this and this and this. I finally had, it seemed, an alternative to masturbation. The argument cleared what little formality had existed between us. We could be honest with each other. At the end of the first week, Kaveri confessed she was fed up with driving me back to the hotel every night. Could I take a rick? But that meant leaving early from her place, which I didn't, and so she ended up having to drive me back a couple of nights. Finally, we both agreed— there was no real discussion of the point— that it made sense for me to move into her spare guest room. As usual, she refused to let me thank her.

"Just don't tell anybody," she said, with a little laugh, "I'm not running a dharmasala."

"Oh God, no," I said, with a little laugh.

I think she told her neighbors I was a distant relative. True enough; we're all related via the One True Monkey.

I suppose it was inevitable that I would begin to presume. You're too good to rot in Bangalore. Seriously, yaar! You're from IIT-M! The Valley is where you belong. With your tech skills you'd be CTO in a year. Let me put you in touch with some friends. Instead of setting me straight, she was strangely subservient. Confused. Flattered, of course. She agreed she should probably leave. But. She agreed she lacked ambition. But. She agreed she was too good for LTI Shoes. But. She agreed. But. Gandhi could have learned a thing or two from her about passive resistance. Unfortunately, Weinberg only had a short chapter on dealing with resistance, with mostly baffling examples involving barking dogs and buffalo bridles. I pushed harder, slipping unconsciously into that form of male chauvinism where concern for a particular woman is used to criticize women in general. You know the trouble with Indian women, Kavi?

She finally found her inner Durga. We quarreled. Over her career. Kaveri drove me home early that evening, lips tight, freezing silence, no goodnight. The moment I got out, she drove off. Squeal of tires. Then the car braked just as suddenly; Kaveri thrust her head through the open window and shouted:

“I’m not a PROJECT!”

I was mortified. She was right. Who the hell was I to hack her life? I could walk away from her problems; she couldn’t. How I had acquired a consultant’s soul? It had been only a profession. I was so preoccupied that night, I forgot to call my wife.

But next morning in the canteen, Kaveri cut off my attempt at an apology, reached over to squeeze my hand and brusquely thanked me for caring.

“No Kavi, I crossed the line. You’re fine just the way you are.” I was ashamed that I might have weakened her with my advice. “I was just projecting my frustrations. I want to do more with my life.”

“Me too! Why don’t you move back here? Let’s start our own company?”

We stared at each other, amazed. I laughed, and after a second, she did too.

“Okay more seriously,” she said, “do you want to go to a dance performance tonight? I have to go. You don’t have to come, your choice.”

It turned out that a distant cousin of hers had completed her Bharat Natyam training, and the girl’s parents had organized a Nattuvangam performance at a school in Indira Nagar. I said yes, and had to keep saying yes, because Kaveri accosted me at various times in the day to assure me that I didn’t have to say yes.

We set out at six. Despite the clusterfuck of fast-food joints, glass-fronted buildings and boutique stores, Indira Nagar had retained its old-Bangalore aura. That impression got even stronger once we were off 100 Feet Road. The evening acquired a leisurely stillness, and perhaps it was the fragrance of jasmine in the air that made me turn to Kaveri and blurt:

“You look great in that sari.” She merely nodded as if I’d pointed out that she had two hands.

The school building, in the Brutalist penal style so beloved of educators everywhere, evoked a flood of nostalgia. My head filled with the ghosts of youth. My school friends crowded around me and I was returned to the days of standing in assembly, childhood fights, exam terrors, crushes, and the relentless push of time towards childhood’s end.

At the entrance to the auditorium, I picked up a pamphlet from one of the two tables on either side of the door. The volunteer— who turned out to be one of Kaveri’s nieces— handed us gift packets, containing a peda and assorted savories. The auditorium was basically just a large rectangular room with an impressive podium and an array of foldable metal chairs. At the very back of the podium was a giant idol of the goddess Saraswati, decked out in a white sari. The goddess of knowledge was always dressed in white.

Indian occasions spend an excessive amount of time clearing their throats. By the time the MC, a tall elegant woman in a gorgeous Kanjeevaram sari, came to the mike, it was eight, almost thirty minutes behind schedule. It was then I discovered the entire program would be in Kannada. I knew enough to get by in the city but this was formal, Sanskritized Kannada. I couldn’t understand a word. Kaveri moved her chair closer to mine and whispered: “she’s introducing everybody.”

There were a lot of people to be introduced. First, the composer, who though absent, still had to be fulsomely praised. Then his composition, Trishakti, was introduced. The dancer’s teacher, a roly-poly woman whose stoic expression revealed her tension, was introduced. The nattuvanar, whose recitation would guide the dancer’s footwork, was introduced. Three dance critics had been invited for the occasion; they were introduced. There was a lot of touching of feet and granting of blessings. After a small

inaugural pooja, everyone cleared the stage, except for the two-man orchestra, seated to the left of the podium, the nattuvanar, and of course, the dancer. The nattuvanar's recitation consisted of an improvised rhythmic combination of percussive syllables, tha-ka-tha-ki-ta and the like, accompanied by musical chimes from finger cymbals. Kaveri's knowledge of Bharat Natyam was far superior to mine and she guided me through the intricacies of the performance.

Trishakti consisted of three stories. The first revolved around the legend of Kalidasa, the greatest of Indian poets, and told of his evolution from ignorance to knowledge thanks to the goddess Saraswati inscribing the gift of language on his tongue. The second story, imbued with eroticism, narrated the love between the goddess Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu. The last story dealt with the goddess Parvati persuading the enraged Shiva to recreate the world after her Lord had destroyed it. In a sense, it was a music lover's guide to quantum field theory.

Rapture. There had been very few situations in my life where I'd had to reach for that word. The chime of the cymbals, the incredible synchrony between the nattuvanar's song and the dancer's feet, the play of emotions on her expressive face— ignorance, compassion, wisdom, tenderness, eros, rage, peace—the intoxicating fragrance from the jasmine flowers in Kaveri's hair as she leaned to whisper in my ear, breathing life, and all of it bracketed by the audience's keen participation; this moment, this gift, this pair of syllables danced the world into being: rapture.

After the performance— had it really been two-and-a-half-hours? – the exhausted dancer bowed. First towards the audience. Then her teacher. She waited. I thought the show was over, but I'd forgotten about the critics. Five chairs were brought up to the stage. The three critics, the dance teacher and the nattuvanar seated themselves. The dancer turned to face them.

The criticism was too technical for even Kaveri. I gathered that the idea was to give the dancer a taste of how things would be in real life. She had graduated, yes, but she hadn't been granted immunity from criticism. I understood very little but was once again seized with that old vast longing for failure achieved, not in the quest for success, but rather, a loving fearless embrace of failure itself. It was late, almost eleven-thirty by the time we left the school. The night was cool and as dark as a cat's soul. As we drove back to the apartment, Kaveri listened with a pleased smile as I raved about the evening.

"This is the real Bangalore," she said at last. "So many nice secrets tourists never get to see. Real pity."

"But it shouldn't be a secret. We should be shouting it from the rooftops."

"Who's we?"

"Us. Yaani, we Indians." I glared at her. "I still can't believe how sophisticated it was. The dancer, the audience, the criticism. A world-class performance in a small Kannada school. You gave me no clue! Suppose I'd never met you? Suppose I'd said no to this evening? Suppose there's no one left to explain the beauty of these things?"

"Suppose, suppose. At least now you see the use of science-fiction, I hope."

I laughed, and she turned her head, smiling. Then she screamed, swerved the car, braked hard. There was a sickening thump. We felt rather than saw the man fall to the side of the car. We sat frozen.

"I think I killed someone," whispered Kaveri. She checked the rear-view mirror. Miraculously, there was no traffic.

"I'll check." My voice sounded hoarse and unnaturally loud. "You stay put."

She got out with me. The road was deserted and in the enveloping darkness, the car's headlights blazed like two disembodied flashlights. We found



him crumpled by the rear wheel. He was groaning; incoherent, drunken sounds. The guy was drunk. He reeked of alcohol. Tattered black T-shirt. The lettering, in white, said: I Shaved My Balls For This? Bastard had been staggering across the road like it was his father's property. I propped him up against the wheel. He had an honest, sun-weathered face. A man in his forties, maybe fifties, with a pencil-line moustache. He had the tough, stocky, square-bodied look so common in men from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They were migrants, they worked crazy hard, they lived six to a room, they didn't get to see their women for months at a time, they were harassed by local politicians, they are forced to live like immigrants in their own goddam country. Drunken bastard.

"He seems all right," I said.

"You think so?"

"Bhaiyya!" I shook the man's shoulder. "Ho bhaiyya!"

He sat up, then shifted to his knees and arms. He was trying to stand. Good sign. Kaveri took out her phone, switched to torch mode. I helped him up, then half-carried, half-dragged him to the side of the road. It was brutally hard and I was wheezing like an old man by the time I was done. I set him down by the pavement, and he just sat there on his butt, legs splayed, head hanging, his body leaning forward as if he were about to do Yoga. He was fine.

"You could've died," I shouted in Hindi. "Others would have left you there."

"What do we do now?" asked Kaveri, wrapping her arms around herself.

"He is fine."

"Yah."

"The fucker was drunk. Look, it's not your fault. We've done what we could. He'll sleep it off."

"We should call somebody."

I spread my hands. She nodded. Yah.

"Come, let's return to the car. Can't just stand here." She was dialing a number. She listened for a few

seconds, then returned the phone to her pocket. "No one's picking."

I grunted. No surprise there.

The fellow cursed us, slurring his words. We looked at each other. He cursed us again, this time with a little more creativity. We laughed, tremendously relieved. For the rest of the ride home, we discussed what had happened, exploring it from every angle. There was nothing we could have done. No street lights. And he was wearing black, the jackass. Jesus. Suppose he'd died or something!

I suppose we should have been more responsible. But how? I told Kaveri that we hadn't taken the easy way out. On the contrary. Weinberg is most emphatic on this point. The "hardest law", as he calls it, the biggest secret of consulting, is this: helping oneself is even harder than helping others. In the morning, we checked the local news. There was no mention of an accident, and the whole event receded into the fog of memory.

In our last evening together, Kaveri complained that her neck ached. I insisted that she allow me to give her a neck and shoulder massage. She changed into a T-shirt and shorts, spread out face down on the futon, her neck hanging just a little over the edge. Elizabeth had trained me well, so I knew what I was doing. Kaveri's skin felt pliant and elastic, and the whorls on my fingertips sparked and delighted in the feel. As I got to work, she read out loud from Weinberg's book. This rule. That rule. Hey, listen to this: 'The best marketing tool is a satisfied client.'

"A happy ending is going to cost extra, client-ji." I slapped her butt.

"Aiiyyo Rama." Kaveri laughed, threw the book away, sat up. She headed for the fridge. Ice cream.

"Two scoops or three?"

"One." I checked my phone. Ten-thirty. Time to turn in. My flight was at eight-thirty in the morning. But if she didn't think it was time, that was fine with me as well. I had no desire to leave Bengaluru. Kaveri. The

city was the woman, the woman was the city.

"By the way, happy Indian birthday," said Kaveri, licking the plastic spoon teasingly, and glancing at me over its transparent rim.

"How do you" But I already knew the answer.

Facebook, of course. My Hindu birthday, based on the lunar calendar, was a few days after the Gregorian calendar one. "Thanks."

"So what would you like for your birthday?"

We didn't sleep that night. We defended the decision to an imaginary skeptic. I had to be at the airport by six. Taxis were totally unreliable in Bangalore. But if Kaveri was going to drop me at the airport, we'd have to leave latest by four-thirty in the morning.

That was, like, what, four hours of sleep? Pointless.

I wasn't sleepy, and Kaveri pointed out she could go in late on Saturday. So on and so forth. Might as well cancel the taxi pickup. Grow long, blessed night.

The pursuit of happiness requires a certain blindness to consequences (Weinberg: 'The surest way to waste time is to throw caution to the winds').

A few months after my return, Kaveri messaged me to say she'd quit LTI Shoes and had joined a human-capital financing startup as its CTO. The company invested in educating bright students in return for a cut in their future earnings. She hoped I too was happy. Hugs.

I imagined calling Kaveri, daring her, come, wear a yellow sari; let's fall in love, run away, burst into song. I settled, however, for a New Year's card.

NEW BANGALORE INTERIORS  
SUNITA PRASAD



RAGHU:

I used to work for a documentary as an internship when I was doing college. Back then I was a kid. I was from a small place. I didn't even know what I was doing with my life. Once, I was on a field assignment with the director, a serious campaigner for India's poor. I was so innocent at that point. I think I'm still pretty innocent but the thing is, at that point, I didn't know a thing and I was traveling alone with this man. We were in separate rooms. He asked me to come in and have dinner with him. And I said, "No, I'm going to have dinner in my room." Not because I thought it would be unsafe but because I really wanted to be alone, you know?

So, he made a huge issue out of that. He told me, "You have to make things a little easier for two people to travel together. It's very difficult to cope

with somebody who is not cooperating." And so the next day, I went. Then he asked me questions, if I had a boyfriend or not and whether I have ever been kissed.

At the end of that internship I was owed a certain amount of money, which he had promised me at the beginning. We were in the lobby of the hotel, I remember distinctly, and he said, "I don't think we can pay you that money." So I said, "Why not?" And he was like, "Well... because people are already talking."

I just cried. I remember going back to my room and thinking, "What have I done?" I didn't know what to do. And so I came back without getting paid.



#### SUPREETH:

I was working at a company in which everybody worked late. It was just the culture in the office. Everybody worked till 12:00 or 1:00 in the night. But my boss had issues with me staying late.











And I would tell him "It's all right. I can stay for another hour. There are buses."

It was this real protective thing. I understood his concern and I really appreciated it. I told him that. At the same time, it's a slightly condescending way of treating me.

Because what used to happen was all these men would stay back. It was a very small team. So, five of us would leave early for various reasons and the remaining five would stay back. And it's like the bunch of men who go out to smoke and they make business decisions while they're out on a smoke break. It kind of felt like that. They would be working till late, exchanging ideas, having dinner. And then I come back the next day, and they've just taken decisions on their own and come to certain conclusions on their own and I wasn't a part of the process, which is where my work suffered.

Except for in Bombay, people don't really take the public transport. So, they don't know what that space is like. Honestly, if I am given a choice between taking a public bus or a train and getting into a cab, I would choose the first. I would go by public transport, because it's well lit up. There are people. You're supposed to be there. As opposed to a cab where I would feel very scared. It's just this one man and I'm trapped inside this box.

#### VIVEK:

Even when I was eight or nine years old, I remember my relatives—some of my uncles and my granduncles—they would tease me. They would say stuff like "Oh, your dad has to save lot of money now to get you married. He has to save up for a dowry." And I used to say, "First of all, if some one comes and asks me for a dowry, I'm not marrying that person. And my dad definitely doesn't have to save up for my mar-



riage." I would say these things. And they would say, "Oh, feminist!"

I didn't really understand feminism as a movement as a child. I didn't know the history of the feminist movement in India, for instance. But as a child I always knew that being a girl and speaking about your rights or about what you want would cause people to say things like, "Oh, who is going to marry you? You're too outspoken." There was always this thing that, "Oh, a man who'll marry you will have to listen to this" and I'd say, "I want to marry someone who is an equal." There would always be a sort of argument with the family, where they would brand me this outspoken girl who will find it difficult to find someone to marry.

I was called selfish constantly by family or by relatives, because of these choices. Or because of even saying that I don't want to marry someone who will ask for dowry. So people would say, "You're selfish." That used to bother me.

Very early on, having certain ideas about justice, ideas of freedom, these things were very much part of who I was. Even in college, people would joke and they would call me the Resident Dissenter. The person who expresses dissent. But after awhile I was so tired of being that person. I used to feel like sometimes your dissent is sort of co-opted. Everyone sees that you're articulating that other view and people enjoy listening to you, but then nothing happens after that.

(EXCERPTS FROM THE SCRIPT + SCREENSHOTS OF THE VIDEO "RECITATIONS NOT FROM MEMORY")



The video "Recitations not from memory" (2014) is the result of an experiment in listening to, reading, and speaking gendered experience in the Indian context during a period of increased attention to gender discrimination within Indian public discourse. Through a search on social media and various Listserv mailing services, I found women who could be considered my socio-economic counterparts in cities across India. I wanted to know the extent to which they thought their gender had affected their personal experiences, and I asked them to participate in anonymous interviews.

In the video (shot in Bangalore), I asked men who are not trained actors to read verbatim from my interviews with women, recounting the experiences of gender discrimination as their own. The men read these accounts to us via a teleprompter without prior rehearsal, so that their spontaneous interpretations and subtle reactions become a part of the performance captured on camera.

I shot the video in Bangalore, a city whose shifting identity I knew only by reputation, to protect it from possible 'otherization' when shown in the context of

my artistic community in New York. Although I am Indian—my parents are Indian ex-pats in the U.S.— I was born and am based in the U.S. and therefore the first audience for my work is typically American. Gender is not a new theme in my work but, until this piece, it is one I have dealt with almost exclusively in its western deployments.

I was nervous about the possibility of arriving in India to record stories about Indian gendered experiences and then bringing them back to the west only to have them serve typical western notions about how women are treated in 'places like that'. I certainly have no desire to contribute to more oblivious tongue-clicking and head-shaking by western viewers who fail to make connections between patriarchy in the global south and the horrors of rape culture in the U.S., exemplified by cases such as the recent conviction of two football players for raping and urinating on a fellow student at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee.

And so Bangalore, with its growing internationalism, taste for nightlife, and hospitality toward microbreweries and high-end hair salons, seemed like the sort of setting that someone living in, say, Brooklyn might not be able to distance oneself from so readily. The stories told in *Recitations* not from memory are specific to India, but not exceptional of India. I wanted a setting that would convey this visually: the international city in the Indian context.

The video takes place in three locations: a culturally-engaged bookstore café which specializes in local languages called *Atta Galatta*, the office of a tech start-up called *Mygola*, and the balcony of *T.A.J. Residency & SKE Projects* itself. These three locations provide references to public space, workplaces, and domestic spaces, standing in for the original settings of the stories that are recounted in the video.



Our walk starts just before the main 'official entrance' of the Electronic City, near a newly built residential area of colorful houses. Photography is still allowed here.

This blue house is almost swallowed up by the blue sky.





50 m

Everywhere in Bangalore is a scarcity of water. Therefore, it is stored in water tanks on the roofs of houses or in water towers like this.





75m

A stopped down construction site, just before the clean and glossy architecture of Infosys IT campus

From one of the alleys in the residential housing, one can catch a glimpse of a bright yellow Hindu temple.



100 m

A worker rests in the shadows.  
Around I-City many people live under  
the poverty line.





140m



200m

In the blazing sun of midday, our walk goes on past colorful houses with clotheslines and reflecting glass facades.



A small wind turbine on a five-storey car park, directly behind the entrance of E-City







350m

The walk reaches the 'official' E-City area, where no photography is allowed. We secretly go ahead.

An astonishing number of trees line the streets. It is unexpectedly quiet and relaxing.



426 m



This sign is all over E-City, becoming its own definition.





840 m

The F-City has an electric power supply independent from the public infrastructure.

*„Corralled in comfort, at the IT enabled service workplace, where work is defined as lifestyle“*

Jaruki Nasir, Author



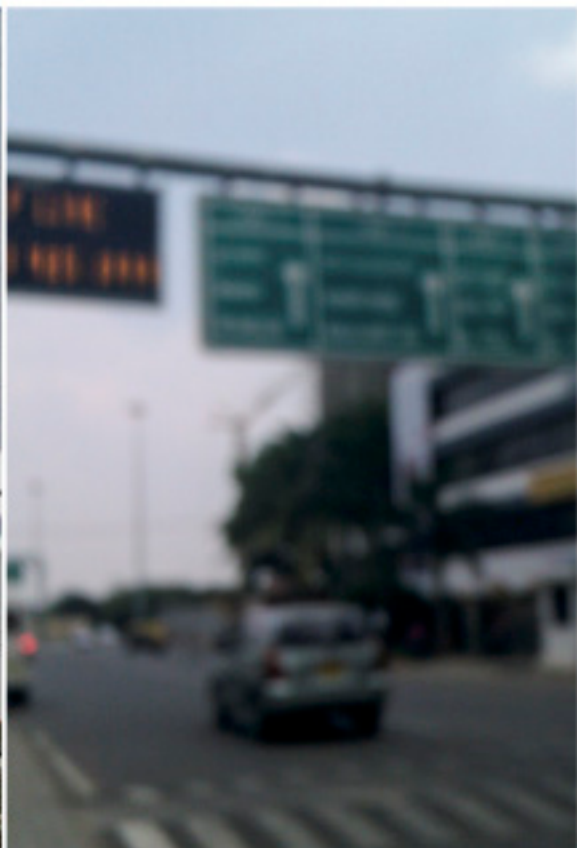
Fearing industrial espionage software companies use electric fences, such as here at Infosys. Founded in 1981 by a few ambitious computer experts, the company symbolises the Indian economic growth related to the IT industry. Exporting customised software worldwide, the company employs nearly 30,000 people. A programmer earns about 750 € per month.





500m

After our walk was blocked by the guards at HP and Infosys, where we were not permitted to enter, we tried Siemens. The guard saw no danger in us entering the premises and let us in (but only after several phone calls and identity checks). Escorted by him, we were allowed to go up to the roof, where our reward was a wide view of the Electronic City and its high-rise estates.



1580m

This blurred picture was taken just before we reached the exit of the E-City. To us it represents the mystery of this inaccessible place.



## THE ELECTRONIC CITY WALK\*

### ANJA GOLLOR AND MIRKO MERKEL

Near the gates of Bangalore, in the southwest of the city, and close to Hosur Road you will find the best protected part of Bangalore: Electronics City. Also called E-City, with its 134 hectares, it is Bangalore's biggest technology park. Around 300 IT industry companies from around the globe are based here, such as Infosys, Wipro, HP and Siemens.

Electronics City was founded by Keonics, Karnataka Electronics in 1978. But it was India's economic liberalization in the early Nineties that made it become what it is today—the flagship of Indian software industry—and is what gave Bangalore its media-effective surname, the Silicon Valley of India. In 1997 the Electronics City Industries Association (ELCIA) began taking care of the maintenance of the area. Its members are representatives of the local IT-companies and they ensure an independent electricity supply and an excellent infrastructure. Furthermore, ELCIA planted 2,000 trees and installed extensive surveillance cameras around the site. When traveling to work in Electronics City you leave behind the congested streets, smog, noise and constant power cuts of the big city and enter the beautiful world of rising India. You reach the peaceful idyll for all 60,000 well-educated employees who speak American English without an accent and own the privileged E-City employee ID card. That is your ticket to the sparkling world of air-conditioned IT temples, golf courts and company-owned fitness centers.

Without an ID card we were not allowed to enter the company premises. Despite all our attempts to get a glimpse behind the scenes, no security guard gave us access. Photography and filming were strictly forbidden on the white site, so the only chance we got to document our walk was by taking a few illegal pic-

tures, giving us only an outsider's view of this well-protected city.

\*An excerpt from the book "Bangalore—The Visual Language of a City" published in 2011 as a diploma thesis for the Communication Design Department at The University of Applied Sciences, Potsdam, Germany (original format: 2 volumes, 18.4 x 26.8 cm in German)



THE STRANGLING WITH MACBOOK  
PRO CABLE CORD SCENE.

April  
2015



ABHI AND AASH IN  
RICHMOND TOWN  
REHEARSAL FOR A FILM -  
"HAWAIIAN IN A MURDER'S  
SHIRT - PART 2"





MY BEST FRIENDS

T-B. NAGAR



GOPALAN MALL  
DUST - BINS

SERENE DUST-BIN,  
YOU ARE MY HANG-OUT  
SPOT

SAGE SPOT





# EXPIRING ESTATE

## RENUKA RAJIV



- 1 HOME MOVIE USING PROFESSIONAL RESIDENTS
- 2 CRITICALLY ENDANGERED COMMERCIAL SPACE
- 3 SOUNDS OF SHOPPING
- 4 PICK A DRINK

# NOMINAL REAL(ITY) SRESHTA RIT PREMNATH

“Nitesh Park Avenue” follows a trend in Indian metropolitan real estate of naming residential properties after places in the United States and Europe. “Prestige Brooklyn Heights,” “Skyline Champagne Hills,” “Nitesh Hyde Park” and “LG Napa Valley” are examples of this countrywide phenomenon. Under construction behind a high, corrugated wall lit with floodlights is a new residential complex that boasts, on an immense vinyl banner, “New York Living in Bangalore.” This nominal displacement of site, which had been a curiosity for some time, was suddenly personal. A developer had unwittingly summarized my predicament. “New York Living in Bangalore” and “Bangalore Living in New York”— the space of nei-



ther/nor that is occupied by the globalized cosmopolitan emigrant that the critical theorist Homi Bhabha had termed “in-between.”

I left Bangalore to study in the US in the late Nineties. My years of adolescence from the late Eighties through the Nineties coincided with the transformation of Bangalore from a sleepy minor city into a sprawling metropolis. It’s hard to pinpoint when this change began, but this period also coincided with the expansion of television in India from a single channel to two in 1989 and then innumerable channels through satellite and cable from 1992 onwards. Internet access finally came to us in 1995. A city that had been called a “pensioner’s paradise” was being called the “silicon valley” by the late Nineties with the influx of national and multinational IT companies into Bangalore.

The impact of globalism was two-fold. The demographics of the city changed dramatically. There was the immigration of IT workers from around the country on the one hand, and on the other, a low-wage workforce from neighboring rural areas to construct the infrastructure to support this fast growing city—a quarter of Bangalore’s population lives in slums. The city’s population rose by 47% in a decade. At the same time hundreds of TV channels flooded our screens with American and British popular media. As an Anglophone, upper middle class, urban dweller I grew up with the virtual landscapes of New York and California alongside the many landscapes of the city and country I lived in. Bangalore, and I with it, was already haunted by a foreignness. A desire to be here and elsewhere at once.

The romanticism and longing implied by Bhabha’s “in-between” however misses the much stronger vector of desire that the Indian capitalist was able to harness from this global imaginary. Let us consider a property developer’s own description of the sky-





scraper that will rise above the Bangalore Golf Club in 2016. Nitesh Estates promises “luxurious private residences which will be a new iconic landmark in the town, ushering in a new paradigm enviable lifestyle of the privileged...” Nitesh Park Avenue offers private residences where the unimaginable is brought to life. It is a seductive reality for a privileged few who can experience Luxury living in the most futuristically designed homes, ensconced with a host of elite amenities.”

The property developer promises this nominal displacement to a geographically privileged elsewhere, but only to the elite. That which is unimaginable to most, is not only imaginable but attainable to the chosen few. The names of properties both reflect the desired “lifestyles” of residents as well as the lifestyle they would like to be perceived by others as living. Reinforced in the use of vocabulary such as “villas”, “bungalows,” “condominiums”, “enclaves” and “clubs” is a form of segregation that harkens to colonial India. This new globalism retains the exclusionary desires of colonialism.



Codified in “Prestige Woodland Park”, “Nitesh Chelsea” and “Sobha Silicon Oasis” is the sheen of foreignness, a memory of a place one has never been that is still more desirable than the here and now (consider “Prestige Déjà Vu”—an apartment complex that claims to be on “one of the few roads left in Bangalore that still sketches some remnants of a beautiful past”). After all, desire depends upon the unattainable. A sentiment that repeats across luxury real estate advertising in the word “envy.”

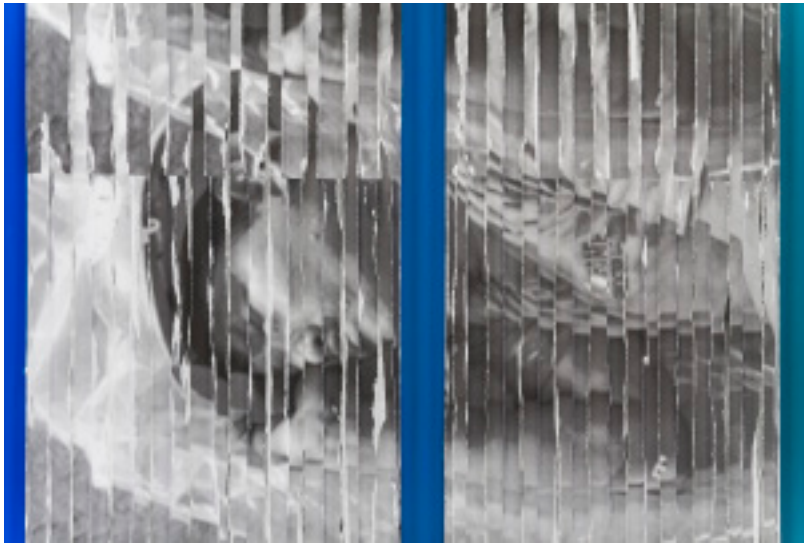


“PLOT”, 2015; INSTALLATION VIEW AT QUEENS MUSEUM, NEW YORK

My ongoing project titled “Plot” examines some of these issues of nominal displacement, as well as the contradictory relationship between property ownership and the bodily occupation of space. Construction workers expend their labor to build properties that they can never own. In India these workers often earn too little to own any property at all and live in temporary shacks, migrating from one construction site to the next occupying the minimum amount of space that a body requires at the discretion of the property owner and site supervisor. These are issues that I have continued to explore in my new body of work for the exhibition “After Midnight: Indian Modernism to

Contemporary India 1947/1997" at Queens Museum,  
New York.

In the work "Sleep/Fall" I use the image of a migrant  
laborer sleeping on the floor of a construction site,



"SLEEP/FALL", 2015; PHOTOCOPIES ON CORRUGATED PLASTIC, CHROMA KEY PAINTS, 96X110"  
INSTALLATION VIEW AT QUEENS MUSEUM, NEW YORK

to consider the limits of ownership. This migrant laborer owns no property and exercises his only remaining resource—his labor power—to eke out an existence. But he surrenders even that when he sleeps.



"PROJECTIONS (1964/2014)", 2015; PHOTOCOPIES ON CORRUGATED PLASTIC, 96X110"  
INSTALLATION VIEW AT QUEENS MUSEUM, NEW YORK



"SLUMP", 2015; SAND AND IRON ON RUBBER, ALUMINUM TUBES, MEASURING TAPE, 64X24X42"  
INSTALLATION VIEW AT QUEENS MUSEUM, NEW YORK



"SLUMP", 2015; SAND AND IRON ON RUBBER, ALUMINUM TUBES, MEASURING TAPE, 64X24X42"  
INSTALLATION VIEW AT QUEENS MUSEUM, NEW YORK

In the work "Projections (1964/2014)" I respond to the 50-year span (1947/1997) marked out by the curator of After Midnight, by shifting focus to a different span of 50 years. This span of time is bookended by

two photographs: the first is the “Pavilion of India” at the 1964 New York Worlds Fair in Flushing Meadows (where the Queens Museum is located), and the second is the aforementioned billboard from 2014 of a residential complex in Bangalore that advertises “New York Living in Bangalore”. While the India Pavilion at the Worlds fair was a government sanctioned “projection” that identified India as historically and culturally distinct from the west, the contemporary property developer taps into a contradictory preoccupation—that of wealthy urban dwellers in India desirous of a property that appears American. These contradictory forces of nationalism and globalism are at the heart of present day Indian politics.

Finally, each of the sculptures titled “Slump” consists of a sheet of sand, two feet wide and six feet long, draped onto an aluminum frame. A yellow measuring tape winds its way on the surface of each form.

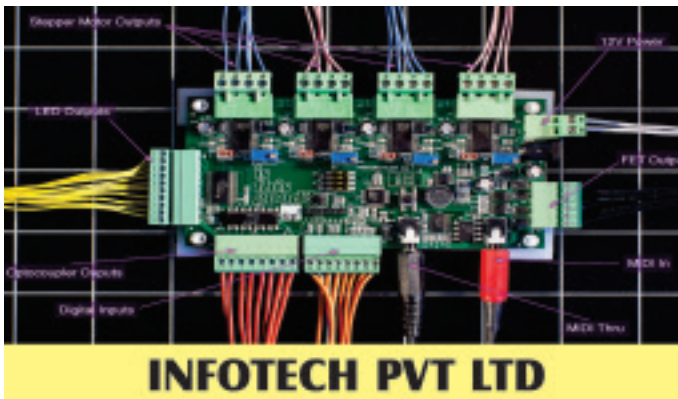
These objects refer to the human body in a much more abstract manner. The Imperial Rule that functions as an arbitrary law by which the physical world is measured, itself bears the trace of bodily units: the inch is a thumb, the foot is the length of a foot. These slumped forms function as both plots of land and as prone figures, while the circuitous loops of the measuring tape fail to accurately measure each site.

In conclusion, my interests are twofold: On the one hand I am interested in the contradiction between the imaginary quality of nominal displacement – the naming of one’s property after a place that is far away – and the real facticity of the physical space that a body occupies. On the other hand I am interested in the imaginary quality of value that has resulted in innumerable apartments in Bangalore that are bought purely as financial investments. These apartments lie unoccupied, unused and under lock and key, while the people who build these properties,

who make up a quarter of the city's population, live in slums from which they may be evicted at the government's discretion. I would argue that occupation, or one's bodily presence in a place, is a primordial mode of being that has been abstracted by colonial and capitalist forces into its monstrous twin, ownership. It is for this reason that ownership will always be threatened by and haunted by occupation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
TARA KELTON

Business cards designed by DTP workers (desktop publishing workers / graphic designers without formal training) in Bangalore for "INFOTECH PVT LTD", a fictional company invented by the artist.











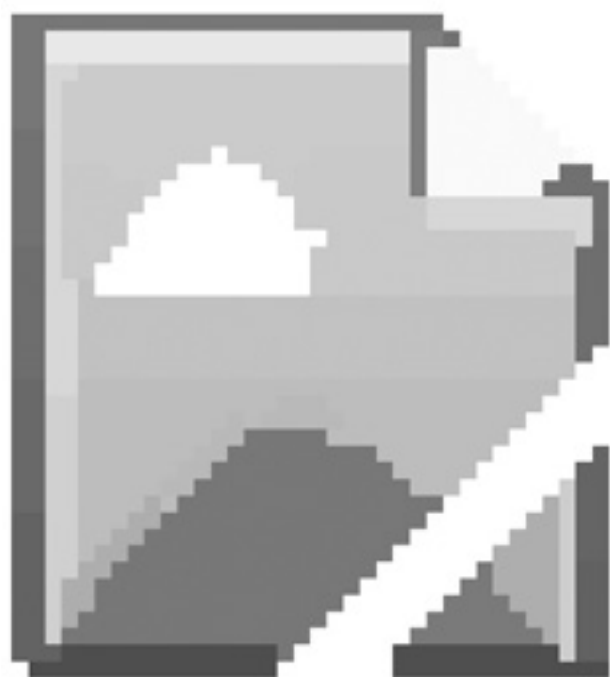
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## CONTRIBUTORS

Abhishek Hazra is an artist based in Bangalore, India. His close yet idiosyncratic study of the historiography of science has led him to examine various technologies of knowledge production and dispersion. He uses video, performance and prints that often integrate textual fragments drawn from real and fictional scenarios. The idea of the thought experiment—where one thinks of things and non-things without necessarily being trapped in things – has always fascinated him. Hazra's work has been shown at the Science Gallery, Dublin, KHOJ, New Delhi, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, GALLERYSKE, Bangalore, Kunstmuseum Bern.

IOCOSE (Matteo Cremonesi, Filippo Cuttica, Davide Prati, Paolo Ruffino) are a collective of four artists and have been working as a group since 2006. IOCOSE's art investigates the after-failure moment of the teleological narratives of technological and cultural development, in regards to both their enthusiastic and pessimistic visions. They have been exhibiting internationally at several art institutions and festivals, including Venice Biennale (2011, 2013), Tate Modern (London, 2011), Science Gallery (Dublin, 2012) Jeu de Paume (Paris, 2011), FACT (Liverpool, 2012), Transmediale (Berlin, 2013, 2015), and featured in publications such as Wired magazine, The Creators Project, Flash Art, Neural, Liberation, Der Spiegel, El Pais.

Tara Kelton is an artist, designer and co-founder and director of T.A.J. Residency & SKE Projects in Bangalore, India. Tara's most recent solo exhibition was at GALLERYSKE (Bangalore) in 2014. Her work has also been exhibited in the Kochi Biennale (Kochi), at Franklin Street Works (USA), Vox Populi (USA), the Queens Museum of Art (USA), Museum of Conflict (Ahmedabad), or-bits.com/ Banner Repeater (UK) and the Centre for Internet and Society (Bangalore).

Anil Menon's short fiction has appeared in a variety of anthologies and fiction magazines such as Interzone, Interfictions Online, Jaggery Lit Review, LCRW and Strange Horizons. His stories have been translated into Chinese, French, German, Hebrew and Romanian. His debut novel *The Beast With Nine Billion Feet* (Zubaan Books, 2010) was short-listed for the 2010 Vodafone-Crossword award and the Carl Brandon Society's 2011 Parallax Award. Along with Vandana Singh, he co-edited *Breaking the Bow* (Zubaan Books 2012), an anthology of spec-fic stories inspired by the Ramayana. He has a forthcoming novel *Half Of What I Say* (Bloomsbury, 2015).

Achal Prabhala is a writer and researcher in Bangalore.

Sunita Prasad is a Brooklyn-based film, video, and performance artist. Sunita's works often employ methods of hy-

bridization between documentary and fiction. These methods have included the insertion of hyperbolic acts of intimacy into public space, the employment of drag as intervention into online communities, and the creation of “misgendered” re-enactments of interview transcripts. As a research-based artist, Sunita’s projects span a wide variety of subjects, landing frequently on issues of gender, identity, and the history of social movements. Her work has been exhibited internationally at venues and institutions including the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Homesession in Barcelona, Torino Performance Art in Turin, Momenta Art in New York City.

Sreshta Rit Premnath is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York. He has had solo exhibitions at KANSAS, New York; GALLERYSKY, Bangalore; The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis; Tony Wight Gallery, Chicago; Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin; Wave Hill, New York; Art Statements, Art Basel; as well as numerous group exhibitions at venues including YBCA, San Francisco; Galerie Balice Hertling, Paris; 1A Space, Hong Kong; Thomas Erben Gallery and Friedman Benda Gallery, New York. He is the founder and co-editor of the publication *Shifter* and co-organizes the ongoing Project for an Archive of the Future Anterior. Premnath is Assistant Professor at Parsons, New York.

Renuka Rajiv has a background in printmaking and she enjoys making things by hand. Her

work is largely drawing centric and incorporates pen, ink, text, collage, installation, stitching, zines etc. It is a priority for the work to be personal and it flits between observation and imagination, incorporating some kind of structural or narrative element to house a number of images together. There is a tendency towards excessiveness sometimes.

Anja Gollor is a graphic designer from Potsdam, Germany. She works in a research lab for Distributed Artificial Intelligence. She has a passion for architecture and city development and created different books in this field.

Mirko Merkel lives in Berlin and works as editorial designer for magazines and newspapers, e.g. ZEITmagazin. He creates the book cover and the corporate design for Guggolz Publisher. And he loves infographics and maps.

Christoph Schäfer lives in Hamburg. Since the early 1990s, he has worked on urban everyday life and the production of spaces for collective desires. This interest is reflected in a wide range of works, that often reflect and sometimes intervene: Christoph is decisively involved in ‘Park Fiction’, the park at St. Pauli’s Hafenrand, based on the ‘collective production of desires’. With ‘Park Fiction’ Schäfer was part of documenta 11. Christoph also collaborates with the Hamburg activist network against gentrification ‘Es regnet Kaviar’ and is a founding member of PlanBude, that currently organises the par-

ticipation in the planning process for the new ESSO-Houses in St. Pauli.

## ORGANISATIONS

T.A.J. Residency / SKE Projects is a residency programme for artists, and not just for artists and an interdisciplinary meeting place for sharing practice, thinking and research. Since its inception in 2011, T.A.J. has aspired to operate as a support structure for the development of artistic and cultural practices and thinking, and to act as an activator of exchanges and conversations across fields of work and research in Bangalore. It aims to promote a mode of coming together and sharing that is non-hierarchical, non-institutional and non outcome-oriented.

The Centre for Internet and Society is a non-profit research organisation that works on policy issues relating to freedom of expression, privacy, accessibility for persons with diverse abilities, access to knowledge and intellectual property rights, and openness (including open data, free/open source software, open standards, open access to scholarly literature, open educational resources, and open video), and engages in academic research on reconfigurations of social processes and structures through the Internet and digital media technologies, and vice versa.

or-bits.com is a web-based curatorial platform, active from September 2009 to June 2015. or-bits.com supported the development, production and presentation of

artworks and discourses engaging with the web and internet cultures through commissioning over 100 artists' works and writing. Its distributed activity included online commissions for group shows in conjunction with organising gallery exhibitions, radio broadcast and print publishing projects to encourage different ways of presenting and engaging with artistic content online.

## EDITOR

Marialaura Ghidini is an Italian curator, researcher and writer who currently lives and works in Bangalore (India). She is Director of Programs at T.A.J./SKE Residency and Faculty at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology. She was founder director of or-bits.com (2009 and 2015), commissioning over 100 artists' works and writing and producing 9 online exhibitions and related offline projects, such as the POD book *On the Upgrade WYSIWYG*. Marialaura has curated projects independently and for art organisations, ranging from artists in residency programmes (Search Engine at Grand Union in Birmingham, UK) and video shows (*The Chroma Show* in Bangalore, India).

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COVERS: Jpeg images from real estate promotional brochures found on the internet.

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